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TIT FOR TAT

A TEUTONIC ADVENTURE

BY

THE MARCHIONESS CLARA LANZA.

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TIT FOR TAT.

PART FIRST.

I.

"TOM," said Philip Randolph to me one evening as we sat together in his cozy little bachelor apartment, "do you see those pictures hanging over yonder on the wall?"

"Of course I see them," I replied. "What of them?"

"Look at them closely, and give me your candid opinion as to their merits."

Being something of a connoisseur in art matters, and not at all loath to display my knowledge, I rose from my chair somewhat more quickly than was my habit, and proceeded to scrutinize the pictures attentively. They were two in

number. The first was a small copy of Raphael's Madonna di San Sisto, and a horrible copy it was too; the drawing was defective, the coloring atrocious—in fact, the *tout ensemble* was not worthy to have graced the doorway of a country inn. The second was somewhat better, although far from good, and represented Correggio's Reading Magdalen. The more I looked upon these wonderful productions—for wonderful they certainly were—the more amazed I became at the bare idea of their hanging upon Philip's wall. Was it possible that he thought them artistic? Had some cunning dealer persuaded him into the belief that they were masterpieces? Pondering deeply upon these questions, and being unable to arrive at any solution that seemed likely to prove satisfactory, I resolved to determine the matter by making a few inquiries of my host.

"Philip," I said, putting into my voice a little pathetic quaver which I thought the occasion warranted, "when your uncle died, did he leave you his fortune upon the sole condition that you

should hang those — those things upon your wall?"

"He certainly did not," replied my friend, stretching out his legs lazily, and puffing a cloud of smoke from beneath his long blonde mustache. "Whatever my uncle's faults may have been, he had more sense than to tolerate such vile daubs as those."

"Did any one else give them or bequeath them to you? Some dear friend perhaps?"

"I never had a friend except yourself, and if I had, he or she was not likely to give me anything. I can conscientiously say that I never received a present in my life."

"You certainly were not fool enough to *buy* them?"

"Most assuredly not."

"Then," I exclaimed, becoming rather exasperated, "where in heaven's name *did* you get them?"

Philip threw the stump of his cigar into the fire, selected another, and proceeded calmly to light it, taking a most unnecessary amount of

time, I thought, for the operation. When he had finished, he raised himself a little in his chair and turned deliberately toward me.

"Do you really want to know?" he asked.

"Do I want to know?" I cried, almost angrily. "Do you think I would stand here asking you all these questions if I didn't? But there's no such thing as getting any satisfaction out of you."

"Thomas," said Philip solemnly, and apparently in nowise affected by my irritable speech, "prepare yourself for a shock—I painted those pictures myself."

The last sentence was uttered slowly and with great emphasis, so that I could remain in no doubt as to the full extent of its significance.

"You!" I exclaimed, glancing alternately at Philip and the pictures, while a horrified surprise took possession of me. "Do you mean to tell me that *you*, Philip Randolph, clothed and in your right mind, are guilty of those horrible objects?"

"I blush to acknowledge it, and yet such is the sad fact."

For all answer, I burst into such an uncontrollable fit of laughter that the tears fairly rolled down my cheeks. When I regained my breath I looked at Philip. He was sitting quiet and composed in his chair, gazing at my irrepressible burst of merriment without the shadow of a smile.

"Phil, old boy," I said, taking out my handkerchief, and wiping my forehead and cheeks vigorously, "you're not offended, are you? I must beg your pardon for laughing so outrageously; but when you made that very extraordinary announcement, I really couldn't keep it, you know."

"Offended!—why on earth should I be offended? Do you think I don't know what disgraceful daubs they are? My dear fellow, I could roar with laughter myself, but whenever I look at them a peculiar and painful reminiscence occurs to my mind, and renders my thoughts anything but pleasant, I can assure you. If you care to hear what that reminiscence is, draw your

chair up to the fire, help yourself to a cigar, and I'll tell you all about it."

I needed no second invitation, being a person exceedingly fond of anecdotes and souvenirs of all kinds; so in a few moments we were comfortably installed, Philip in his big arm-chair on one side of the fire, I in mine on the other, and the table holding Philip's smoking set, between us.

"Now, old man," I said, "I'm all ears, so begin."

II.

Ten years ago, began Philip, long before I had the pleasure of your acquaintance, my father, for some reason which I have never yet been able to divine, suddenly conceived the wild and incomprehensible idea of making an artist of me. I had for some time been under the impression that cattle-raising was my only vocation in life, and I eagerly looked forward to the time when I should be a gentleman farmer, riding about on horseback and giving orders to my

workmen. Of course, it was nothing but a boy's whim; but all the same I had set my heart on it, and nothing could induce me to believe that I should be successful at anything else, especially art. When you look at those pictures yonder, you will perceive that my judgment was perfectly correct. Not so my father. He was a maniac on the subject of art. Several years previously he had suddenly detected—heaven only knows what led him to the discovery—that sparks of artistic genius lay slumbering in the depths of his own soul, and from that time on, the calm and peace of our hitherto happy household was rudely broken into, with no hope of its ever being re-established. The enthusiastic author of my existence fitted up a studio, installed himself therein, and painted day and night. You may perhaps form some slight idea of his productions when I tell you they were about on a par with mine. He began to load his conversation with technical terms and phrases, talked about "tone" and "breadth," and all that sort of thing; in short

made a perfect fool of himself. Was it any wonder, then, that I hated the very name of art, and that the older I grew the more firmly my dislike became rooted? But it was in vain that I reasoned with my father and declared that, unlike him, artistic genius, or even talent, had been entirely omitted from my composition; his belief to the contrary was securely grounded, and he insisted that at least I should endeavor, to the best of my ability, to follow his advice and wishes. To please him, therefore, I made the attempt, and after two years of hard, unprofitable labor it was concluded that I should go abroad to "finish." Now I had not the slightest objection to going abroad, but I demurred strongly at going as an art student. I made a final appeal to my inexorable parent.

"Father," I said, "look at these specimens of my work during the past year. The more I study, the worse they get. Don't you see it's of no use? Let me stay at home and raise cattle."

"Ah! my boy," he replied, rubbing his hands

together with a degree of satisfaction which exasperated me almost to madness, "Rome was not built in a day. Why, it takes years before you can produce anything which is really artistic in every sense of the word. Look at the time I have spent in study. But I do not regret one hour of it, for at the present moment I think I may safely say I stand quite alone in my particular branch."

I glanced round my father's studio, in which we were standing, and thought that certainly his last remark was not to be denied.

"Now, look here," he continued, quite unconscious of what was passing in my mind, "Dresden is the place for you. It is one of the greatest art centers in Europe. One visit to the Royal Gallery alone would teach you more than a month of study here would do, and then there's the Art School—none better anywhere. Besides that, look at the society—German, American, English—all nationalities; in short, you will lead an existence a prince might envy."

"If I were a prince *par hasard*," I thought, "with what intense delight would I make away with my palettes, brushes, colors, and all the rest of an artist's paraphernalia." However, after much discussing and arguing, it was finally decided that I should go to Dresden, and to Dresden I went.

It was the month of June when I arrived in the Saxon capital. The air was balmy and delicious—spring just developing into summer—an atmosphere totally unknown to our American climate. It was my first experience in a foreign city, and the impression it made upon me was decidedly pleasant. Had I wished, I could have had all the society I desired, for, as soon as my name was registered at the American banker's, cards and invitations were showered plentifully upon me—for where can one go and not find a host of acquaintances? But, inasmuch as I had come to Dresden solely to study, I resolved to perform my task—I cannot call it a pleasure, conscientiously—instead of giving up my time to

society. Nevertheless, before settling down to work, I undertook to "do" all the sights the city and vicinity afforded. I spent a week in the picture-gallery, where I first saw the master-pieces which inspired those atrocious copies hanging over there. Then came the Green Vaults, the porcelain factory at Meissen, and Saxon Switzerland. At the latter place I fell in with a party of Americans who proved to be excessively agreeable; and in this way my otherwise solitary tour was rendered very enjoyable, although climbing mountains was never my *forte*.

Sight-seeing over, I returned once more to Dresden, and began my work in earnest. I took rooms in the Bismarck Platz, and repaired daily to the Art School on the Brühl'sche Terrasse, where every opportunity was afforded for the cultivation of artistic genius. My days were spent pretty much alike. In the morning, after breakfast, I walked down the Prager Strasse to the Brühl'sche Terrasse, passing through the wide market-place, whose bright stalls, filled

with tempting fruits and gay flowers, were a favorable contrast to our American institutions of that kind. I rarely worked later than four o'clock, for I am, as you know, extravagantly fond of music, and it was one of my chief delights to spend an hour in St. Paul's Cathedral and listen to the chorister boys practicing their chants and hymns. Later I generally went to some out-door concert, where my chief glimpses of German life were obtained. This I enjoyed beyond everything. The excellent music, the officers in their blue and white, or red and black uniforms, the glasses of foaming Bairisch and Böhmisch bier, the old *Hausfrauen* with their knitting, Fräuleins with folded hands and downcast eyes, and the groups of gay Americans and English people, laughing, talking, and paying no attention whatever to anything or anybody, produced an impression upon me that fifty evenings at Thomas's or Gilmore's would fail to do.

Such was my life—quiet and inoffensive enough, was it not, Tom? And in this way

the days sped on until the middle of July was reached: then something happened which changed the whole course of things, and made me take a greater dislike to art than ever.

III.

The weather was becoming very warm, and made the close confinement of the Art School most irksome and oppressive. For this reason I gave up working for so many hours, and generally left between two and three in the afternoon.

On this particular occasion which I am about to mention, I had conceived the insane idea of copying the Sistine Madonna. That I, without talent, or even taste, should aspire to succeed where thousands of the best artists in the world have utterly failed, will perhaps seem to you the height of presumption and arrogance; but I sought to justify my behavior by the thought that, since I was capable of producing nothing

that had the slightest pretension to artistic value, it mattered little what I painted.

What will probably appear to you still more inconsistent, is the fact that I did not copy from the original in the Royal Gallery. The truth is, Tom, I was so fully aware of my incapacity as an artist, that I was positively ashamed to expose my ignorance before the mass of strangers which always overruns the gallery in summer. I therefore contented myself with a most excellent copy which hung in the Art School.

The morning on which I began this masterly production was unusually warm. All the windows of the long studio building stood wide open. There was no sound without save the voices of the passers-by on the Terrasse, varied, from time to time, by the noise of a steamboat on the river. Now that I had undertaken to reproduce the Madonna, I felt less inclined to work, and more discouraged than ever. However, I settled myself bravely to my task, and began to sketch in the outlines of the picture. Try as I

would, the expression of the faces would not come right. My Madonna looked as if she were suffering from toothache, and the two little cherubs beneath appeared anything but angelic. Tired and disgusted at my utter inability, I at last threw down my palette and brushes with a gesture of impatience, and, seizing my hat, sauntered out into the open air.

I looked at my watch. It was only one o'clock, and the heat was intense. What could I do to while away the afternoon? Where should I go? Not to the gallery, for I was in no mood to look at pictures. I might sit awhile in the *café* up yonder on the Terrasse and cool myself with an ice; but then the *café* was filled with a parcel of ill-mannered noisy Germans drinking beer and smoking vile tobacco. No; I certainly would not go to the *café*. I had half made up my mind to go to my rooms in the Bismarck Platz and devote myself to that most uninteresting of all occupations, namely, writing letters to my

anxious family at home, when my attention was suddenly attracted by an altogether unexpected and novel sight. A young girl was seated at the top of the broad flight of steps leading down to the street below. Her face was hidden in her hands, and she appeared to be in great distress. By her side stood a basket filled with bouquets of fresh violets and garden roses. She was evidently only a common flower-girl, and under ordinary circumstances I should probably have passed by without noticing her, and yet somehow the sight of her grief interested me at once. I approached her gently. She must have heard the noise made by my footsteps, but she remained perfectly motionless, evidently absorbed in her sorrow. I ventured to make a remark.

"Will you sell me some of your flowers?" I asked. At the sound of my voice she raised her head, apparently somewhat startled. She had a beautiful face—as totally unlike the typical

Gretchens and *Blumenmädchen* of the Fatherland as it was possible to be—the blue eyes, rosy cheeks, and braided flaxen hair of the ordinary Saxon peasant were wanting here. On the contrary, her brilliant black eyes and olive complexion would have induced any one to pronounce her an Italian; and I thought so myself until she spoke. She hastily dried her eyes on the corner of her blue apron in rather a sullen manner, I thought, and then pushed the basket toward me.

"Does the *gnädiger Herr* prefer roses or violets?"

"I will leave that to you," I answered. "You shall choose for me. But, first of all, tell me why you were crying just now."

"That can matter nothing to a gentleman like you," she replied, rather independently it occurred to me, and at the same time, as though anxious to change the subject, she selected a small bunch of violets from the basket and offered them to me.

I took the flowers and threw some money into her lap. She eyed the coins greedily, just as a starving dog might look at a bone, and then shook her head.

"*Ach, nein!*" she said sadly, "my poor violets are not worth half so much."

"Never mind," I answered gayly, "take half for the flowers and keep the rest for your tears. By the by, what is your name?"

"Lottchen."

"And how old are you?"

"Nearly seventeen."

"You cannot come often to the Terrasse, or I should have seen you before. Where do you usually sell your flowers?"

"Sometimes on the Bürgerwiese, sometimes over yonder in the Neustadt."

"Well, Lottchen, if you will come here every day, you will always find a ready purchaser in me."

She thanked me gratefully, and as two gentlemen at this moment approached her, I fastened

the violets in my buttonhole, nodded good-day, and ran lightly down the steps.

After all, the weather was not so warm as I thought; the air seemed to have cooled off wonderfully now that I was out of that close studio. I walked up the narrow Schloss Strasse, past the brilliant arrays of smiling Dresden shepherds and shepherdesses in the shop-windows, and as I walked I thought of Lottchen. She was only a flower-girl, and yet she interested me strangely. What a glorious face she had! Ah! had I been a real artist, instead of a sham one, what a magnificent picture I could have made of her, just as I had seen her to-day—her dark eyes appealing so piteously for sympathy, and the basket of roses and violets on her arm.

I did not go to any concert that evening. Somehow my usually gay spirits seemed to take a melancholy turn. I stretched myself at full length on the sofa in my own room, and begged my landlady to lend me a German novel, with which I hoped to partially, if not completely,

banish my despondent thoughts. She sent me "The Sorrows of Werther," and over this cheerful piece of literature I fell sound asleep, and dreamed that I was once more standing beside Lottchen in the Terrasse; only, instead of flowers, her basket was filled with huge slices of bread and butter, one of which she fastened to the buttonhole of my coat.

IV.

On the following morning things seemed to go worse than usual. My Sistine Madonna positively refused to bear the slightest resemblance to the original, and the more I worked the more disgusted I became with myself and the picture. As soon as half-past one struck, I put away all my materials and left the building. Lottchen was nowhere to be seen, so I walked over to the edge of the Terrasse, and, leaning on the iron railing, looked down at the

blue river and at the bustle and traffic on the bridge leading over to the Neustadt.

Presently I turned my head and saw Lottchen coming down the broad walk, with the sunlight shining upon her through the branches of the linden-trees which bordered the path on each side. She caught sight of me almost immediately, and approached me smiling. There were no traces of tears on her face to-day.

"Ah, Lottchen," I said, "so you have not forgotten me?"

She did not reply, but held her basket toward me, inviting me silently to help myself.

I selected the flowers I wished, and drew some money from my pocket to pay for them.

Again I noticed the same eager, greedy look come into her eyes that I had observed the day before, and I confess it rather startled me.

She seemed to notice what was passing in my mind, for the disagreeable expression instantly died from her face as her eyes met mine, and she said softly:

"Ah! how very good it must feel to be rich, and to go about like that with one's pockets stuffed with gold."

"Very likely; but I am not rich, Lottchen. On the contrary, I shall very soon have to work for my living, just as you do."

"*Herr Je!*" exclaimed the girl incredulously, "how can that be possible? Gentlemen do not work."

"In my country all gentlemen work," I said, smiling.

"Do English gentlemen work like the peasants do here?"

"Not precisely, I imagine. But I am not an Englishman, I am an American."

"An American!" Lottchen's black eyes opened very wide. "Ah, then the *gnädiger Herr* must be very rich. All Americans are rich."

What on earth can she know about it? I thought. Then aloud I said:

"Undoubtedly a great many of them are; but unfortunately it has not pleased Heaven to make

me one of the number. Only think, I shall probably have to support myself all my life long by painting pictures."

I made this latter remark with some hesitation, for in my wildest flights of imagination I could never fancy a possible purchaser for even the most presentable of my productions—and when I thought of my Madonna I actually felt sick.

But Lottchen adhered to her argument with that invincible obstinacy of which the European peasant alone is capable.

"If you are an American," she said, "you must be rich, for I have been told that all Americans are rich. You may paint pictures to amuse yourself; but for a support! *Ach Gott! das wäre ja zu komisch!*"

As I talked to her I found the shyness which had pervaded her manner at our first meeting gradually wear off, and in a short time she appeared completely at her ease with me. I took advantage of this to ask her once more why I had found her in such distress the day before.

"You are very good, Herr, to trouble yourself about me," she said gently. "After all, it was only a trifle that worried me. My mother is very old, but up to the past week she has been able to support herself by making lace. A few days ago, however, she fell ill, and was obliged to give up her work, so that it was left to me to make both ends meet in our little household expenses. Yesterday was a bad day, though. No one seemed to want my flowers, and the whole morning long I did not sell even one mark's worth. It troubled me very much, for hitherto, although we have been poor, we have kept out of debt. But when you came, *gnädiger Herr*, and paid me five times the worth of my violets, a weight seemed lifted from my heart. I told my mother when I went home of the kind English Herr—I thought you were English—who had given me so much money, and who had promised to buy from me every day. *Du lieber Himmel!* I never saw her so glad in my life before. It did my heart good to look at her."

"You and your mother live all alone, then?"

"Yes, quite alone."

"Well, Lottchen, be sure not to forget my violets every day, and as long as I am in Dresden I shall see that you want for nothing."

She thanked me, wished me a smiling "*guten Tag*," and went on her way along the Terrasse, offering her sweet-smelling bouquets to the passers-by.

I did not go straight home that day, but, instead, crossed the bridge and went over to the Neustadt, and seated myself on a bench opposite the Caserne. A company of soldiers was just entering, headed by an officer in very tight trousers and a very long sword, which he brandished aloft as though preparing to decapitate some imaginary enemy. The heat and the march together had not tended to improve the personal appearance of the men. They all looked ready to drop.

I myself was anything but comfortable, sitting there with nothing between me and the sun but

the very smallest thing in the shape of a tree that can possibly be imagined; but the solitude pleased me, for the street was comparatively deserted, and all the soldiers had disappeared within the precincts of the barracks. My thoughts went rapidly over the events of the past two days, and after much mature reflection and prudent reasoning, I came to the true but unflattering conclusion that I was making a fool of myself.

"Philip, my friend," I said, addressing myself unconsciously, "do not, I beg of you, relapse into a state of complete idiocy. If time hangs heavy on your hands, and you are in need of society, why, in Heaven's name, don't you seek it among your acquaintances here? Is it possible that you have come to Dresden with no other purpose than that of making yourself the laughing-stock of the town by hanging about the most conspicuous highways in company with a flower-girl—a vulgar, uneducated, German peasant? If some of your friends at home had seen you this morn-

ing, you never would have heard the end of it. No; take my advice, stick to your paints and brushes, and leave pretty flower-girls alone, or you surely will live to regret it."

Oh! that I had followed my own counsel. But then a man never pays any attention to the advice of his dearest and best friend, so why should he be expected to follow the admonitions of his own brain?

I continued to see Lottchen every day. My Madonna progressed slowly, but in August I finished it, if you can call such a daub finished at all; and then I began that other thing, the Magdalen.

The weather grew hotter, and my hours for working shorter. I hated the confinement of the studio, and I loved being out in the open air, talking to Lottchen.

One day I made my appearance on the Terrasse rather earlier than usual. I had not looked forward to seeing Lottchen for a good half hour yet; but, to my utter astonishment, I perceived

her standing at a little distance from me, apparently in close conversation with a stranger, a man of her own class. His whole aspect and manner were decidedly unprepossessing. He was roughly dressed, in coarse, ill-made clothes, and his face wore an unquestionably disagreeable expression. Lottchen's attitude toward him surprised me still more. She seemed to be pleading with him for something which he was evidently unwilling to grant. Her hands were clasped nervously together, and her large, troubled eyes raised to his.

I stood still and watched them intently. Evidently they had no idea of my close proximity, for they continued their conversation apparently heedless of all that was passing around them. Suddenly, however, Lottchen turned her head in my direction, and saw me. She said something hurriedly to her companion, who also turned, looked at me earnestly for an instant, made some reply to her, and then walked off in an opposite direction.

Lottchen stood for a moment watching him, and then, seeing that I made no effort to approach her, she advanced toward me somewhat timidly.

I confess that I was rather vexed at the scene I had just witnessed. Who was this coarse, vulgar-looking fellow, who seemed to be on such familiar terms with Lottchen, and why was she evidently ashamed that I should see her in his company? Yes, I was decidedly ill-humored, and must have shown it in my face, for I noticed that Lottchen blushed as she spoke to me, and that she was unmistakably embarrassed.

She wished me a simple "*guten Tag, gnädiger Herr,*" and offered me her flowers, making no allusion whatever to the stranger who had just left her.

But if she was determined to ignore the subject, I was not.

"Lottchen," I said, assuming a severe tone, and frowning ominously, "who was that man, and what did he want of you?"

The girl's embarrassment increased, and tears sprang into her eyes.

"*Lieber Herr*, I would rather not tell you," she answered, in a low voice.

"But, Lottchen, I insist. You will probably say it is no business of mine, and perhaps you are right; but you may be sure that it is only my interest in you which prompts me to be so determined upon a subject that otherwise would not cause me a moment's thought. If anything troubles you, tell me frankly, and I will do my utmost to help you."

"No," she answered, this time without raising her eyes to my face, "I have nothing to worry me now. You think, perhaps, that the man you saw me with is my lover. He is not that."

"What is he to you then?"

"I have never spoken of it to any one, and yet, if I must tell it, I would rather it should be to you, because I feel sure you would understand and not blame me too much."

"I do not think I should blame you, Lott-

chen, you do not look capable of anything very wrong."

The fact is, I was so relieved to hear the man was not her lover, that all the ill-humor vanished from my face, and I was quite prepared to meet any other announcement she might make with smiling good-nature.

"I would rather not have told you," continued Lottchen; "but, since you insist, I will do so, for you have been very good to me. *Gnädiger Herr*, the man you saw me with is my brother."

"Your brother!" After all, I was not quite prepared for this.

"Yes, my only brother. There would be no shame in that," she went on, with a little sigh; "but, unfortunately, he is not a good man. He left us years ago, and my mother thinks him dead, but I see him from time to time."

"What does he want of you—money?"

"Yes."

"And instead of handing him over to the city authorities, you give it to him, of course?"

The withering sarcasm intended to be conveyed in this speech was evidently lost upon Lottchen.

"He is my brother; I cannot forget that," she said.

"Lottchen," I said impatiently, "listen to me. You are talking perfect nonsense. If that man, your brother as you say, ever troubles you again, let me know, and I will see that it is the last time he ventures to approach you. Will you promise to let me know?"

"No; I cannot promise you that."

"Why not?"

"Because he is my brother."

"Lottchen," I cried, now really angry, "you are a little fool, and I'm sorry I took the trouble to question you about the matter at all. Since it apparently gives you pleasure to have this man following you about, why see him every day if you like, and give him every pfennig you earn. It's none of my business. Only don't expect me to encourage your folly with my patronage."

With these words I turned my back upon her and was walking off in a towering rage, when I heard her light step behind me and felt the touch of her hand upon my arm.

"*Lieber Herr*," she said, caressingly, "do not be angry with me. I will promise you what you asked."

I was instantly mollified.

"You see, Lottchen," I remarked in the most patronizing tone I could command, "it is all for your own good. If I did not take an interest in you, I would not care how many wicked brothers you had, or how much they persecuted you."

V.

Summer was rapidly deepening into autumn; we were in September now, and already signs of approaching winter were becoming visible. Most of the strangers who had been spending the season in Dresden were preparing to leave, and the concerts and places of amusement were

but thinly attended. All this, however, mattered little to me, for I kept more to myself than ever. Since the appearance of Lottchen's brother, nothing unusual had occurred. My art studies advanced neither more nor less successfully than was their wont. I was still at work upon the Magdalen, and still perfectly aware that I had mistaken my vocation, or rather, that my father had mistaken it for me. Several times I had been on the point of writing home to my family, and requesting permission to abandon art, return to my native shores, and pursue the unromantic but highly practical occupation of cattle-raising, on which my heart was still fixed. However, I never did so. I enjoyed my life in Dresden, quiet though it was. I was fond of the out-door life, the music, and, above all, my daily meetings with Lottchen, which had become such a matter of habit that I should have felt utterly lost without them. Not that I was in the least bit in love with the girl, Tom. Thank Heaven,

I never got quite so far as that. No; as I look back on it now, I think I can truthfully say I never felt any stronger sentiment for her than a mere brotherly interest. You may laugh if you will, but it's a fact.

Now (continued Philip, helping himself to a fresh cigar), I am coming to the tragic part of my story.

I found Lottchen one day on the Terrasse in tears. It immediately occurred to me that her villainous-looking brother had been tormenting her again, and I resolved to put a stop to it at once.

"Lottchen," I said, my voice trembling with indignation, "you need not tell me why you are crying, for I know already. What has he been saying to you? If he has dared to threaten you, I'll break every bone in his body."

The girl wiped her eyes and looked at me vaguely.

"Of whom are you speaking, *gnädiger Herr?*"

"Why, your brother, of course. Who else

could bring all those tears to your pretty eyes?"

"I have not seen my brother for a long while; not since that day when you found us talking together. No, it is not that which troubles me."

"Tell me, then, what has happened."

Lottchen's tears began to flow afresh.

"*Ach Gott!* it is my mother, my poor, old mother! I fear she is dying."

"Your mother dying! How long has she been ill?"

"Only since yesterday. Ah! if you would only help me. But I hardly dare to ask you."

"You know, Lottchen, that whatever you require of me, if it be in my power, I will perform gladly. Now, what do you want me to do for your mother? Shall I send her some fruit—a case of wine?"

"*Du lieber!* I would never think of asking such a favor as that, only I thought, as you had been so very kind to me, perhaps you would not mind coming with me to see her for a few mo-

ments. She has heard me speak of you every day, and she is anxious, very anxious, to see you once. It is not very far from here that we live, and I think she would die happier if she could let her eyes rest for one minute on the kind *Amerikaner* who has done so much for me."

I was really touched. Here, at last, was the gratitude which I had never expected to find in this world, and coming from a simple, uneducated German girl, too! It was almost incredible, but the situation also had its ridiculous side. Philip Randolph, stopping daily to buy a bouquet of violets and chat a few moments with the fair vender, was all very well; but Philip Randolph, walking through the crowded thoroughfares of Dresden side by side with this same person, would certainly create a sensation. However, there was no help for it. I could not offend her by refusing such a request; so, inwardly calling upon Providence to spare me the mortification of meeting any acquaintances, I cheerfully replied

that it would give me the greatest pleasure to accompany her.

I was very fond of Lottchen in a certain way, and I really was pleased to have this opportunity of doing her a service; but I also had all a man's horror of being made to appear ridiculous; and, as I look back upon the figure I must have cut that day, Tom, a cold perspiration breaks out all over me, and a shiver runs up my back to the very roots of my hair. To say that the people stared, would but faintly express the torture I endured from their piercing eyes. A person who has never resided in the Fatherland can form no idea of what the average Teuton is capable in this respect. It is like Niagara—no one knows what it is until they see it for themselves. And, indeed, the sight of a fashionably dressed young man parading the streets in company with a peasant girl carrying a basket of flowers on her arm, must have been a novel spectacle in Saxony.

Lottchen's usually quick perception seemed to desert her on this occasion, for she apparently

saw nothing at all out of the way in regard to the situation. This I attributed to her evident anxiety about her mother.

"Poor girl!" I thought, "how she suffers!"

There was little or no conversation between us. I concluded that Lottchen was not in a mood for talking, and I am perfectly sure that I was not. We walked on through several dingy, dirty streets, in an unfrequented part of the town, fortunately, until we came to one that was dingier and dirtier than all the rest. Lottchen stopped short in front of a tall stone house, very shabby and out of repair.

"You are quite sure you do not mind coming up?" she asked, raising her sad eyes to mine for the first time. "It is on the third floor that we live."

The place, certainly, was anything but inviting, and I glanced at the filthy staircase inside with a shudder; but I was too proud to turn back at this stage, and, moreover, very unwilling to hurt Lottchen's feelings.

"If you will follow me," she said, "I will show you the way up."

She began to ascend the narrow stairway, and I followed close behind her. The boards creaked at every step, and there was no light whatever to make the way clear for us. The atmosphere smelt damp and moldy, and I racked my brain in a vain attempt to discover how a person like Lottchen, so superior in refinement to the rest of her class, could exist in such a miserable hole.

We arrived, finally, at the third floor. Lottchen advanced toward a door in the front part of the house, and pushed it open.

"Come in," she said to me.

I entered the room; it was almost in total darkness. I could see nothing—absolutely nothing. Overcome with astonishment, I was on the point of turning to Lottchen to inquire if she had not mistaken the place, when she suddenly caught me by the arm, drew me forward, and hastily turned the key in the lock of the door.

At the same moment the forms of two men emerged quickly from the obscurity at the far end of the room and seized me by both wrists.

"Here he is, Fritz," said Lottchen's voice. "Fasten his arms, and then give the things to me as you get them."

All this was the work of a second. I was so completely taken off my guard that my arms were tightly pinioned behind me before I could make the slightest resistance. Although the room was barely lighted, I had no difficulty in recognizing one of the men as the same whom I had seen in the Terrasse with Lottchen. The other was a perfect stranger.

Once convinced of the object they had in view, I made every effort to free myself, but all in vain. When my arms were securely tied behind my back and a gag placed in my mouth, the two men proceeded to empty my pockets. Fortunately, I had very little money on my person, but what there was they calmly appropriated and handed to Lottchen, who stood by,

watching the performance with a degree of interest which, had the circumstances been different, I should have found charming. My watch was next secured, and my scarf-pin, which was a pearl of great value, set so as to form the body of a demon; then my shirt-studs and a seal ring. These, likewise, were given into Lottchen's keeping.

"Is that all, Fritz?" she asked.

"I don't see anything more; do you, Wilhelm?" inquired the supposed brother. "You had better take what you've got, Lottchen, and be off."

The girl produced a large cotton handkerchief from her pocket, in which she carefully placed my stolen possessions; then she moved slowly toward the door.

"*Guten Tag, Herr Amerikaner*," she said, dropping me a low courtesy.

If my hands had only been free, I would have strangled her.

After Lottchen's departure, the two men left

me standing in the middle of the room, still bound and gagged, while they retired to a distant corner to hold a little private conversation. For nearly a quarter of an hour, I should think, they whispered together, and then approaching me once more, they removed the gag from my mouth, leaving my arms still bound, and quitted the room without speaking, locking the door behind them.

VI.

When I found myself imprisoned in that vile den, in addition to being basely deceived and robbed, my rage knew no bounds. I shouted myself hoarse, stamped on the floor, and rushed wildly to and fro, hoping to discover some means of exit; but all in vain. The house was painfully quiet; not a sound was to be heard, save the noise now and then caused by a passing vehicle in the street. Oh! if I could only get one of those windows open, so that I

might call for help! And Lottchen! what a fiend in human shape. Words fail me when I attempt to describe the impression left upon me by her deceitful and outrageous conduct. My blood actually boiled at the thought of her. Now that her nature was fully revealed to me in all its hideousness, I could recall many a look and word which would at once have aroused the suspicions of any other man than myself. I remembered how eagerly she had eyed the silver coin with which I had paid her for her miserable flowers, and how she had endeavored in more than one round-about way to discover the exact condition of my financial circumstances. Oh! fool, dolt, idiot that I had been! I could have wept from sheer vexation and mortification. And how was I ever to get out of this frightful place? They could not certainly leave me here to starve. Probably they only locked the door to frighten me, and would come back later and release me.

In the meanwhile the afternoon wore on. I had no idea of the time, and no way of ascertaining it. My watch was gone, but had I possessed fifty of them, of what use would they have been while my hands were tied behind my back?

I grew desperate, calling loudly for help, and stamping on the rotten boards of the floor until I was in imminent danger of falling through to the next story. I must have kept this up for fully an hour; my voice and strength were beginning to fail me, and I was about to throw myself upon the floor and abandon myself to utter despair, when a sound resembling an approaching footstep caught my ear. I shouted once more loudly, and then listened. Yes, some one was coming, without a doubt. I grew breathless with suspense. In another moment I heard a fumbling at the latch of the door, then the key was turned, and a very old woman appeared upon the threshold. As she caught sight of my

disheveled figure, she started back with upraised arms.

"*Herr Je!*" she ejaculated, eyes and mouth wide open with astonishment.

I rushed toward her frantically.

"Here, old woman," I cried, "undo my arms, if you please, and then stare afterward. I have been robbed and shut up in this infernal hole for hours."

"*Herr Je!*" said the woman once more; then, seeming all at once to grasp the situation, she advanced further into the room, and proceeded to untie my arms. The operation required some time, for the villains had done their work in the most approved fashion, and the old woman's fingers were shaky; but finally the task was accomplished, and I was a free man again.

I did not stop a moment to question my benefactor, not even to inquire how she discovered my presence in the room. I simply muttered a few words of thanks, and flew

like a madman down the staircase into the street. There was not a soul to be seen. I walked on for a little distance, hailed a passing droschky, and drove straight to the Bismarck Platz. I had some money in my room, with which I paid the driver. I then proceeded to pack carefully all my belongings, including the two pictures, the last one being just finished. This done, I sought my landlady, announced my sudden departure from Dresden, paid her a week's lodging, and then, calling a second droschky, drove to my bankers. There I drew all the money deposited in my name, and made arrangements to have my luggage sent for and carried to the *Leipziger Bahnhof*. Finally, I went to a restaurant and dined.

You may perhaps think it strange that I made no effort to recover my stolen property, or to discover the whereabouts of the thieves. It would have been wiser, perhaps; but then to do so was to expose my folly to the whole town, and I could

not have borne the ridicule which I felt confident would be heaped upon me from all sides. No; better let them go, and myself too. I dined leisurely, and then drove to the railroad station, where I took a ticket for Leipzig.

This was my last appearance in Dresden.

The next mail carried the following message to my father:

"DEAR FATHER:

"I have come to the conclusion that I shall never succeed as an artist. I have worked conscientiously for six months, and find my taste for painting decreasing instead of increasing. This being the case, I have therefore decided, unless you have serious objections—in which circumstance you can telegraph me—to take one of the steamers leaving for America within a fortnight, and return to my native land.

"I trust, after my arrival on the other side, you will permit me to cultivate the taste I

have always had in view—raising cattle. In this, at least, I am confident of success.

"Believe me, dear father,

"Your affectionate son,

"PHILIP RANDOLPH."

The rest of my story, Tom, is soon told. I sailed for America within two weeks following my unfortunate adventure, and three days after I reached home, my uncle died, leaving me his entire fortune. When this unexpected piece of good luck befell me, my father extracted a solemn promise from me that I would renounce the vulgar occupation of cattle-raising, and live upon my income, as a man of large means, in his opinion, ought to do.

"If you cannot be an artist," he said with a sigh, "you had better be nothing."

That was ten years ago. All this time, those pictures have been laying away forgotten. I came across them the other day, and the whole story connected with them occurred to me so

vividly that I determined to hang them up, hoping they might prove a warning to me should I ever happen to be on the brink of another piece of folly.

Philip paused, and for a moment neither of us spoke. Then, feeling that it was required of me to say something, I broke the silence by exclaiming:

"My dear fellow, your story is an excellent joke—excellent. At the same time you must acknowledge that you made a frightful ass of yourself."

Philip evidently had not expected to hear anything very complimentary, for my candid speech was received smilingly.

"No one knows that better than I do," he said; "but you must acknowledge, Tom, that it was one of those vile plots of which any one might become the victim, notwithstanding the utmost prudence and caution."

"Pooh!" I exclaimed contemptuously, "not a bit of it! Why, to me, it was as plain as the

nose on your face what the girl was after from the very beginning. Couldn't you see; from the way she pocketed your money and all that, that she wanted to rob you?"

"I saw it, yes," replied Philip, "but, unfortunately, at a time when my perception was not calculated to help me."

"Well, all I can say," I observed sagely, "is that no creature in petticoats, let her be ever so beautiful, could possibly take *me* in in that style. If there is one thing I pride myself upon, it is the faculty of recognizing a designing female when I see one."

Philip did not reply immediately, but sat gazing into the fire, which had died down until it was merely a mass of cinders with a few burning coals in the midst. Presently, however, he raised himself in his chair, and looked at me earnestly.

"Tom," he said, "you may make your mind easy on one point. It is a source of great consolation to me at present to be able to look

back and say truthfully, that, in all my intercourse with Lottchen, I never felt any stronger feeling toward her than mere brotherly interest."

PART SECOND.

I.

FORTUNE, I regret to say, had not been so lavish of her favors in regard to me as she had been to Philip Randolph. There being no rich uncle, or any other affluent relative, to leave me sole heir to his possessions, I was forced to earn my daily bread, so to speak, by the sweat of my brow. I was a lawyer, and although fame had not yet made my name familiar in every court-room, I felt that, nevertheless, I was on the road to success, and could, in time, earn an enviable position for myself.

My office was shared by a young man named Harding, who was a person of such very marked peculiarities that I cannot resist giving a slight description of him.

At the time from which our friendship dated, several years before, he was a thorough society

man. There was absolutely no limit to his powers of endurance in regard to all those little pastimes which society invents with the praiseworthy but not always successful intention of delighting the heart of mankind. He was continually on "the go" from morning till night; he neglected his professional duties in order to devote himself to dancing and dinners; and it was the universal opinion of everybody that Arthur Harding belonged to that order of gay butterflies which regards pleasure as the sole aim of existence, and which, in consequence, never settles down to anything useful or profitable.

No one, however, in this world, is infallible; and the very people who had hitherto expressed their opinions so freely and decidedly upon the subject of Mr. Harding, were soon forced to admit that they were no more exempt from making blunders than the rest of their brothers and sisters. This was proved by the fact that the object of their remarks suddenly took it upon himself to disappoint their expectations in the

most unforeseen manner imaginable, and without any apparent reason for so doing. He gave up society, neglecting to give the public any warning of his intention, and, having done so, proceeded to absorb himself in his profession, and to devote his leisure hours to the study of philosophy and the theory of evolution.

People looked at each other significantly, shook their heads, and declared that he must have been disappointed in love. Perhaps they were right; such things have been known to happen constantly, and inasmuch as Harding made no attempt to explain his very extraordinary conduct, it was probably the most likely conjecture for the world to arrive at.

I myself, from motives of delicacy, never questioned him upon the subject, for I knew that if he failed to admit me to his confidence, it was for some good reason of his own—always supposing his behavior to have been actuated by a motive; but I used to joke with him sometimes about his reformation, as I called it, for his *blasé*

languid air, upon all occasions, was an absurd contrast to his former exuberant spirits.

"Clason," he said to me, one Sunday afternoon, "amuse yourself at my expense, by all means, my dear fellow; I don't mind it in the least. As for myself, I'm past all that. By the time you reach my age"—he was precisely four years my senior—"you will doubtless have discovered that the terms 'enjoyment' and 'pleasure' are purely relative. I remember reading, not long since, in a book by Herbert Spencer, or some other fellow who goes in for the same sort of thing as he does, that most of the emotions we experience, or rather think we experience, are entirely imaginary; for instance, there can be no real pleasure, any more than there can be real pain, or real anything else. Now, what is your opinion on the subject?"

"I think," I replied gravely, "that if some unknown and unsuspected force was to bring my head in sharp contact with yours, the sensation we should both feel would not be purely imaginary."

The sense of humor which this observation was intended to convey did not seem to strike Harding. He merely elevated his eyebrows, looked at me for a moment, and then continued:

"It is a very puzzling subject to get upon," he said, speaking in a slow monotone, which had become habitual with him. "Sometimes I get the ideas so mixed up that I can hardly grasp the meaning myself. But, at the same time, there is something very fascinating in the study of the complex organization of matter; it's the kind of thing you don't want to stop when you've once begun at it, don't you know? Of course, though, you can't be expected to regard scientific contemplation from the same standpoint that I do, your taste being confined to the more insignificant questions of life."

After making this speech Harding leaned back in his chair, as though overcome by the exertion, and began to examine his finger-nails with languid interest.

"See here, my dear fellow," I said, "it strikes

me that your ideas are becoming more—more peculiar every day. Any other person might be tempted to call you a fool, but not I, for I know you don't in the least understand what you are talking about, and that, if you did, you wouldn't believe a word of it. You are to be pitied, that's all."

"It is you who fail to understand and believe, Clason," replied Harding. "With all your love of argument, you must admit that you have no fixed theories upon any subject."

"Of course not; if I had, I should probably have no love of argument—the two things are absolutely incompatible."

"All this is very sad," said Harding, addressing himself to the table in front of him.

"What is?"

"This lightness and levity of which you are unable to divest yourself, even when the most serious subjects are under discussion. I think it is Darwin who says—"

"Oh! hang Darwin!" I exclaimed, rising

from my seat and walking over to the window. "Not so very long ago, you were the gayest man in New York, yourself. You went in for everything in the shape of pleasure there was to be found, and as for talking philosophy and all such rubbish, why, you would as soon have talked about flying over the moon. I can't think what has come to you."

Harding sat still for a few moments, gazing at the floor; then he lifted his eyes to the chandelier.

"Now that you mention the moon," he said slowly, "what are your ideas as to the existence of lunar vegetable life?"

I walked away from the window, and approaching my friend's chair, looked him steadily in the face.

"Well," he said, "why don't you answer my question?"

"Harding," I said, "take my advice, will you?"

"What is your advice?"

"To go and see a physician immediately, for it is my firm opinion that you are suffering from softening of the brain."

II.

The conversation related above took place about two weeks after Philip Randolph had undertaken to communicate his ill-fated adventure to me. Since then, I had seen scarcely anything of him, as I had one or two law cases on hand which required my immediate attention, and when evening came I felt too tired, generally speaking, to do anything beyond dropping in at the club for an hour or so, to play a rubber of euchre. One afternoon, however, while Harding and I were busy over our writing, the office-door suddenly opened and Philip appeared on the threshold.

"I say, you two fellows," he remarked, evidently thinking a more cordial greeting superflous, "what are you about?"

"If you have anything pleasant to propose," I replied, in my usual humorous strain, "we are about ready to stop writing and listen."

This feeble attempt at a witticism was received by both Harding and Randolph with the contempt it deserved.

"I was going to ask," continued the latter, "if you would both join me at the Brunswick this evening, for, to tell the truth, I am getting fearfully tired of Adolphe's eternal Chateaubriand, and feel that a change of any kind would do me an immense amount of good."

Adolphe was the club *chef*.

"If you mean dinner," I said, "I'm your man, Phil, and I think I can speak for Harding as well."

"Yes," replied the latter absently; "yes—yes, of course. I shall be most happy—no, I don't mean happy. I should say rather, that I accept the invitation you have just given me, and that the feelings with which I look forward to this evening are most auspicious."

"Drop that, if you please, Harding," said Philip, "or, by Jove, I'll take it all back and say I don't want you." Then, drawing out his watch: "Why, hang me, if it isn't three o'clock, and I've got an appointment miles away at half-past. Well, good-by, or rather, *au revoir*, for I shall expect you both at seven."

When he had gone, Harding, who had apparently been lost in reverie since his last remark, ventured to begin another.

"What a pity," he said, "that a man possessing the double advantages of wealth and position, like Randolph, should have so little of the true philosopher in his nature."

Here he paused, evidently awaiting my reply; finding, however, that I made none, he continued:

"Every man benefits not only himself but the entire human race when he attempts and succeeds in a search for the absolute, though very few, unfortunately, have the moral force necessary for this undertaking. Even persons who have abstract principles in regard to cer-

tain matters in which all are allowed free thought, such as the existence of a personal God or a personal devil, for instance, are very often restrained from expressing them by the narrow prejudices which, I regret to say, govern the actions of most individuals. Now, it has frequently come under my observation—— Why, what's the matter with you, Clason?" suddenly glancing toward me and seeing that I was absorbed apparently in my writing. "I really believe you haven't heard a single word I've been saying."

"I heard you, of course," I answered; "but I had no idea you were speaking to me. I imagined you to be addressing the chandelier; your eyes were certainly cast in that direction."

Harding sighed.

"You are as bad as all the rest," he said; "I shall never, I fear, be able to implant the true scientific philosophical spirit within you."

"No, you will not," I replied; "and what's more, if you don't get on with your work, you

will have the extreme pleasure of spending the evening in writing instead of eating."

This observation had the desired effect, for the study of scientific philosophy has never yet been known to interfere with a man's appetite, and Harding was no exception to the rule; indeed, I do not think I err in stating that, had I offered a superior dinner to my friend, on the sole condition of his adopting a theory in direct opposition to one of his own, he might possibly have been induced to accept the sacrifice.

It was about half past five when Harding and I left the office to go and dress for dinner. Our way led us up Broadway, among the mass of bustling humanity which always infests the streets at that time; but we took very little notice of the throng about us. Harding was, as usual, lost in thought, and I, for want of something better to occupy my mind, was wondering what sort of a dinner Philip would give us, and whether we should have *purée d'asperges* or *consommé printanière*, or both. At the corner of Fourteenth

street, however, my attention was suddenly attracted by the sight of a flaming yellow placard on which was printed in enormous red characters:

GERMANIA THEATER.

THIS EVENING AT 8 O'CLOCK, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN AMERICA,

SCHILLER'S WONDERFUL DRAMA,

WILLIAM TELL.

FRAULEIN MARIE ALTBERG AS BERTHA VON BRUNECK.

I was not a person given to reading street advertisements, and yet, strange to say, this one seemed to attract me. I had never been to the Germania Theater, but there was no reason why I should not go if I wished. A drama by Schiller must certainly be worth seeing, and the name of Marie Altberg had rather a nice sound about it. One got awfully tired of all the English plays, and I understood German enough to follow the actors, even if I could not grasp the meaning of every word. Perhaps Philip would

like to go also. He had been in Germany, and must care for that sort of thing. Yes, I was quite sure Philip would like to go.

I was rudely awakened from my reverie by the sound of Harding's voice.

"What on earth," he inquired, "are you staring at? Why are you standing stock-still with your eyes fixed on that placard?"

"I don't know, I'm sure," I answered. "Harding, have you ever been there?"

"Been where?" asked Harding, who was already thinking of something else.

"To the Germania Theater."

"I think I was there once, a long time ago, when I used to care for that sort of thing. I have a faint recollection of an exceedingly fat woman appearing in the costume of a very young child, and singing, "*Ein kleines Kindlein bin ich*," or something of that sort. I remember thinking it a beastly, vulgar sort of place."

"Vulgar or not, I think I shall go and see for myself what it's worth. Fräulein Marie Altberg

cannot certainly be a fat woman; at any rate, I have conceived a violent fancy to see her."

"Violent fancies," said Harding, "are always to be suppressed; for the results they lead to are invariably of an excessively dangerous nature. Not two days ago, I read somewhere—"

"Never mind that now," I interrupted; "what I want to know is, will you come with me?"

"Come where?"

"Why, to the theater of course."

"Not I, my dear fellow, you really must excuse me. I have long since given up that sort of thing, and then again, I don't think I could stand the sight of that stout female. Who knows? She may be there yet."

"All right," I replied good-humoredly, "just as you please, of course. But I'll ask Philip—I'm sure he will be delighted."

III.

An hour later, we were all three sitting over Blue Points and Chablis in a small private room at the Brunswick. Harding was making an unsuccessful attempt to draw Philip into a discussion concerning the origin and development of animal life as found in certain forms of sea-weed, and at the same time asking his opinion about the family of radiates. I was busy with my oysters, and infinitely regretting that dinner would be over at entirely too late an hour to admit of my going to the theater even for a few minutes.

"You must allow," Harding was saying, holding his wine-glass between his forefinger and thumb, and twirling it slowly round and round, thereby running the risk of spilling half its contents; "you must allow, Randolph, that the investigations which have been made of late years in regard to polypes are of an exceedingly interesting character. When I say 'of late years,' I mean within the present century, of course. I

myself have the utmost sympathy with this particular branch of scientific research as independent of all other branches, and I come honestly by the feeling, for the male members of my family have always taken a prominent place among men of advanced ideas, whose leading characteristics are perseverance and resolution where a search for the absolute is concerned; and, if I remember rightly, my grandfather wrote his work on the *Achnanthes subsessilis* when he was only twenty-five, and before his death, which occurred fifty years later, he published a second book, taking for his subject, 'The Polype, and its Mode of Development.' If you care to have these works to read in your moments of idleness, it will give me the greatest pleasure to lend them to you."

Harding did not raise his eyes as he terminated this speech. Had he done so, he would not have been edified by the sudden expression of horror which passed over Philip's countenance.

"Thanks," said the latter, when he had somewhat recovered himself; "you are very kind indeed, Harding, very kind; but you must not trouble yourself. Indeed, you really must not mention such a thing; I might lose them, you know; I never can keep a thing more than a day without losing it, and besides that"—here he stopped short, and suddenly observing the broad smile with which I was regarding him, we both burst out laughing.

Harding glanced up in some surprise.

"What is the joke, may I ask?" he inquired.

"Nothing," I said, "except the idea of your offering scientific books to Philip. Don't you know that his mind is not capable of comprehending anything of a more classical nature than Wilkie Collins or Cherbuliez? If you give him something heavier than that, you are casting pearls before swine."

"Thank you, Thomas," said Philip; "that is precisely what I should have said myself, if you had given me the chance. When I read, I want

to be amused; and certainly a history of the Achnanthes what-do-you-call-it, with all deference to your grandfather, Harding, cannot be very amusing."

"Ah, by the by, Philip," I said, "speaking of amusement, have you ever been to the German theater? The Germania, you know."

Philip frowned at me over his glass of Chambertin. "Don't mention German theater to me," he said, "or German anything else. They are a vile people; they speak a viler language; they eat vilest dinners. I hope never to have occasion to associate with them again."

"Who wants you to associate with them? I asked you a simple question; why don't you answer it?"

"You asked me if I had ever been to the German theater; my answer implied that I had not, and heaven forbid that I ever should go."

"Beastly, vulgar place," said Harding, dropping suddenly from scientific contemplation to commonplace observation. "I told Clason so this

afternoon, but he seems to have gone out of his mind on the subject. You probably will not believe me when I tell you he stood fully five minutes on the corner of the street, staring at a placard, on which the company was advertised to appear in some low comedy or other that nobody ever heard of."

"Low comedy!" I exclaimed derisively. "Perhaps you are not aware that it was written by Schiller, and also that it was not a comedy at all! Probably you never heard of Schiller!"

"Schiller," said Harding, relapsing once more into his languid manner of speech, "was, undoubtedly, a great poet, but I have not much faith in anything he may have written in the way of a drama; and as for his philosophy, I fear it was very unevenly balanced. Now, that other one, Goethe, was more sound in his ideas; he—"

"Will you go with me or not, Philip?" I asked. "Of course, if the mere mention of the German language recalls your lamentable experience in

Dresden, I would not press the matter for the world."

"Experience! what experience?" asked Harding, evincing an interest which might have been due to the wine, or else have arisen spontaneously. "I am always fond of listening to experiences."

"Mine does not amount to much," said Philip. "It is merely an incident which occurred ten years ago, while I was in Dresden. I made a fool of myself over a peasant girl with a pretty face, and she rewarded my kindness by robbing me. Nothing at all unusual, I suppose."

"Ah!" said Harding, "the lower orders of Europeans, particularly the Germans, have always been characterized by an excessive love of greed. They will steal anything they can lay their hands upon, for the mere pleasure of stealing. Some learned men, I believe, have recently brought the facts of this subject down to a purely scientific basis. It must be, I should think, a very interesting study."

"It was anything but interesting to me, I can assure you," said Philip; "but tell me, Tom," he continued, turning to me, "what has caused this violent enthusiasm in regard to the German theater? Are you smitten with the charms of one of the actresses, a lovely creature who talks *Platt-deutsch*, and arrays herself in a costume resembling Joseph's celebrated coat?"

"Nothing of the kind," I replied. "I have never thought of going there any more than you have, and, for the life of me, I can't tell you why I want to go now. I saw the advertisement in the street, and was attracted by the title of the play and the name of the young woman who is to take the principal *rôle*. I have conceived a violent fancy to see both—that is all."

"I remarked to Clason, that no person who properly respects himself is ever led away by violent fancies. They should always be suppressed; they should, indeed," said Harding.

Philip helped himself to *suprême de volaille*.

"What is the name of the young woman?" he asked.

"Fräulein Marie Altberg."

"Pooh!" said Philip contemptuously, "what's in a name? Take my word for it, she is some antiquated female with feet a yard long and a waist like a beer-barrel."

"Precisely," said Harding vaguely; "they always are."

"Well," I said, in no wise discouraged, "I am determined to go at any rate, and if neither of you will accept an invitation to accompany me, why, I shall go alone, though it's only a matter of curiosity with me, I can assure you. Had you mentioned such a thing yesterday, I should probably have laughed at you."

"Just as we are doing now," suggested Philip.

"Yes," I answered, "just exactly as you are doing now."

IV.

It was about eight o'clock on the following evening when I entered the Germania Theater and demanded a ticket of the burly Hebrew who occupied the box office. Having obtained it without difficulty, I proceeded to make my way to the seat it represented, which, fortunately, was in the second row of orchestra stalls, a position which afforded me equal advantages for observing both the stage and the audience, the latter being last, but by no means least, among the attractions. The play had not yet begun, so I employed the few minutes which preceded the rising of the curtain in scrutinizing my neighbors. On my right were seated a very large woman and a very small man—husband and wife, of course—and both belonging unmistakably to the House of Israel. The woman wore no gloves, but what she lacked in this respect was more than balanced by a quantity of rings with which her broad and rather doubtful-hued fingers were

covered. A gold chain, apparently several yards in length, was wound round and round her neck, and hung in graceful folds across her ample bosom. Her hair was dragged back off of her face, then piled in heavy masses on top of her head, and, surmounting this, was a hat of such very large dimensions that the entire structure, measuring from the end of her chin to the terminus of the hat, was about two feet in height. The effect, when viewed from the side, was rather appalling, and, with a shudder, I turned my attention to my neighbors on the left—two very ordinary specimens of the German race, probably clerks in some second-rate shop. It is perhaps superfluous to state that both wore spectacles, although they were comparatively young men, and that both looked as if they had outgrown their clothes.

A violent scraping of fiddles interrupted my observations, and I cast my eyes in the direction of the orchestra which was about to begin the overture. The conductor stepped briskly into

his seat and rapped on his music-rack with the bow of his violin; the musicians picked up their instruments, fell into position, and then the entrancing strains of *Tannhäuser* were wafted over our heads and into our ears. All those who a moment before had been busy reading their programmes, or else engaged in conversation, suddenly dropped both, and a breathless silence ensued, as far as the audience was concerned, at least. Finally the music came to an end with a harmonious crash—why it was *Tannhäuser*, instead of Rossini's *William Tell*, I was at a loss to imagine—and then the curtain rose upon the most extraordinary scene I had ever witnessed.

Not being able to comprehend precisely what it was intended to represent, I had recourse to my programme, which bore evidence to the following: "Lake in Switzerland, bordered by a rocky coast, giving a view of William Tell's hut, and in the distance a village lying in sunshine—snow-capped mountains, etc." The rocky coast and William Tell's hut were of about the same size,

but I shall not speak of such trifling incongruities. A boat now appeared on the lake, and in it a fisher-boy, whose attire was totally unlike that of any other fisher-boy in the known world; but this fact was entirely forgotten when he began to sing an ode to the surrounding country, in very bad German, which was responded to by a shepherd and a hunter, who were to be seen standing on the pinnacles of two neighboring mountains. The singing concluded, an interesting conversation was begun and finally interrupted by the appearance of William Tell himself, in a gorgeous green doublet, and armed with an enormous bow and arrows. He joined in the conversation with an air that would have been most imposing had not one of the calves of his legs unfortunately become turned round to the side, thereby giving rather a ludicrous aspect to his bearing, which not even Schiller's most inspired sentences could relieve.

After one or two scenes of slight importance, during which I wondered if Fräulein Altberg

would never make her *entrée*, the dialogue was rudely and unexpectedly broken into by a villager, who rushed wildly upon the stage, exclaiming that somebody or something had fallen off of a roof; and at the same moment Bertha burst upon the scene, crying:

"Rennet, rettet, helft.
Wenn Hilfe möglich, rettet, hier ist Gold."

She was greeted with a round of applause, and I bent eagerly forward to get a better view of her. Never in my life had I seen so beautiful a face. But what astonished me greatly was the fact that nothing about her betrayed her German nationality. She was very dark, her hair being of that blue-black shade so rarely found except among Spaniards and Italians. Her eyes were large, liquid, tender, fascinating —the kind of eyes that are capable of expressing anything, from gentlest pity to the most violent scorn; her figure was perfect—tall, graceful, and admirably proportioned. She might have been about seven or eight and twenty—not a day

more—just the age when to me a woman is most attractive. I had barely time to note all these facts when she made her exit from the stage as quickly as she had appeared, and the entire next act passed without her coming again upon the scene. Somehow the play seemed to have lost all interest for me. A strange fascination had led me to the theater, and the sight of Fräulein Altberg had only served to strengthen it. Was ever anything so absurd? Could it be possible that I was falling in love? Nonsense! I had too much good sense for that, I hoped. I was perfectly aware, also, that the goddesses we worship before the scenes are frequently the very opposite behind them, and that should I chance to make the acquaintance of this one in particular, I should in all probability find her illiterate and vulgar. Horrible idea! And yet, when she came in a moment later, attired in a dark-green hunting dress which fitted her exquisite form to perfection, I resolved to leave no stone unturned in order

to procure an introduction to her. Man is but a weak mortal, after all.

How charmingly she played! It now occurred to me for the first time in my life that the German language was one of untold beauty, and I instantly decided to look for a master on the following day and begin a course of reading, commencing with "William Tell," so that, should the piece have a long run, I might understand it better.

The scene between Bertha and her lover, Rudenz, was played in a manner that might readily have excited the envy of many of our American actresses; and later on, when Tell shoots the apple from his son's head, universal admiration was openly expressed on all sides as, on seeing the boy unhurt, Bertha cries:

"O, güt'ger Himmel!"

in a tone of voice worthy of Ristori herself.

"*Ach, wie schön!*" remarked the colossal Hebrew with the hair and bonnet, turning to her diminutive spouse. "*Nicht wahr, Franzerl?*"

"*Ja, ja,*" was the response, uttered in accents that appeared to emanate from the boots of the individual who was speaking; "*ja, ja, natürlich.*"

Another act passed before Fräulein Altberg appeared again, and when she did finally come on, it was toward the end of the performance. I was quite provoked. Really, I thought, they might have given her a better part. Such a woman as that, with her dazzling beauty and wonderful talent, was worth a fortune to any manager, and ought certainly to have a *rôle* that would tend to display her charms to their fullest advantage. Surely, they had no business to give such a stupid play as "William Tell," and expect any one to come and see it! Why, it was only fit for a *débutante*, and a very ordinary one at that.

The curtain fell, and I rose mechanically from my seat and began to make my way out among the crowd.

"*Wunderschönes Mädchen!*" said a voice be-

hind me; and then another, speaking in English, remarked:

"Can't say I agree with you. Pretty, of course, but not a bit of style."

Surely the sound of that voice was familiar to me. I turned hastily and saw a client of mine, a young man named Wright, whom I also met frequently in society, standing close to me. He perceived me instantly.

"Good-evening, Clason," he said; "I did not know you were an *habitué* of the Germania."

"Neither am I," I answered; "this is my first experience."

"Indeed! Why, I never miss a night when there is a change of programme. What do you think of the performance?"

"Excellent; and as for Fräulein Altberg, she is the most beautiful creature I ever beheld."

"Ah!" said my friend, laughing, "so you are gone too, are you? Well, good-night; glad to have met you."

"Good-night," I replied, and buttoning up

my overcoat, for it was chilly, I walked off in the direction of my lodgings. "Gone too," I repeated to myself. "Now, what on earth could he have meant by that?"

V.

"Clason," remarked Mr. Harding the next day, with slightly elevated eyebrows, which was the nearest approach to surprise that he was capable of, "is anything the matter with you?"

"Not that I am aware of," I replied. "Why do you ask?"

"For the last hour, I regret to say," said Harding, "the expression of your face has been anything but an interesting study. There is an indication of some hidden emotion; in short, you appear to have something on your mind. Now, all this is a great mistake—a very great mistake. Philosophy teaches us that calm indifference to emotion of any kind is the thing of all others to be cultivated. No man who properly respects himself ever gives way to emo-

tion, whether of pleasure, or anger, or pain, or anything else. He may feel it, of course; but to show it!" At this point, words seemed to fail Mr. Harding; but after a few moments of reflection, he continued: "It is such bad form," he said; "such very bad form. Look at *me*, for instance; by constant practice in the right direction, I flatter myself that I have become perfectly impenetrable in regard to this distressing peculiarity. Should an earthquake at this moment shake us both out of our chairs, you would not see a muscle of my face alter. Complete command of oneself is a great source of consolation. I may even go so far as to state that it is an absolute necessity nowadays, when it is impossible to tell one moment what is going to happen the next. As for frowns and sighs," said Mr. Harding, gazing pensively at the toes of his boots, "they are simply disgusting. To hear a person sigh is quite enough to upset my equanimity for twenty-four hours. No true philosopher ever does such a thing. There are various

theories, nevertheless, concerning the philosophy of the emotions. Some authors even venture to state that each separate characteristic can be easily traced to a preternatural condition of some portion of the human organization. Now, for instance, it may be quite possible that your unhappy expression arises from some slight affection of the liver or stomach. I was reading a book the other evening, by some man who seems to know all about it, and he says that any violent emotion can almost always be tracked to an indigestible dinner, or something of that sort. On the title-page of his work he has changed the well-known lines, '*Un soupir vient souvent d'un souvenir*,' to '*Un soupir vient souvent d'un souper;*' and I must say I have on several occasions been quite inclined to agree with him. It is very puzzling, however, to know just what theory to adopt in regard to this matter—there are so many different opinions; but, at any rate, I know from personal experience that all emotion, from whatever cause

it may arise, can always be suppressed, and I think it is one's bounden duty to do so—to suppress it, I mean—it is so very unpleasant to witness."

Mr. Harding paused, and there being apparently nothing in his speech which required a reply, I made none.

"Oh! by-the-by," he said presently, "did you answer my question or not, Clason? I've quite forgotten."

"I told you there was nothing the matter with me, as far as I know," I said. "I was thinking about the piece I saw at the Germania last evening, that is all."

"Ah!" said Harding. Then, after a moment's silence: "So you really went! Well, was she there?"

"She was; and, Harding, she is the loveliest creature I ever set eyes on."

"She must have changed considerably, then," said Harding, languidly, "for when I saw her, I thought her quite a disgusting object."

"Of whom are you speaking?" I inquired.

"Of the stout female I mentioned to you the other day—Frau von Seidensticher, I believe her name was, though probably she is called something else by this time—it was ten years ago, you know. I shall never forget my feelings when she came on to the stage in that ridiculous costume. I—"

"What do I care about your Frau von Seidensticher!" I cried, exasperated. "I never heard of her in my life; very likely she has been dead for years."

"I hope so, indeed," said Harding.

"The person I saw last night," I continued, "would have aroused enthusiasm in a stick or a stone, or even you, Harding. Talk about emotion, indeed! Why, had you been there you would have been wild—perfectly wild with delight. It is always those who set to work to control themselves who turn out worse than anybody else."

"I trust," said Harding, "that I shall never

so completely forget what is due to myself or my friends as to allow myself to be carried away by the mere sight of a putty-faced German woman kicking about the stage of a third-rate theater and speaking in vulgar gutturals. Heaven forbid that I should ever sink so low."

"Very well," I said, "we won't quarrel about it, at all events. There is no law to compel you to either see or listen to Fräulein Altberg; but please allow me to do as I please in the matter."

"Certainly, my dear fellow. By all means, go there if you enjoy it. But it is a very sad state of affairs. Just fancy, if you continue to go on in this way, you may finally come to imagine yourself in love—and that," said Harding fervently, "would be so horrible that the very idea of it almost takes away my breath. A man should avoid falling in love just as he would avoid the cholera, or the yellow fever, or anything else that is disagreeable. No philosopher ever falls in love."

"Oh! hang philosophers!" I cried wrathfully; "the very sound of the word makes me sick! Who is talking about falling in love? What put such an idea into your head?"

"Clason," said Harding sadly, "when a man sits for an hour with paper and ink before him under the impression that he is writing, while in reality he is staring at vacancy, and when this unfortunate state of mind is followed by exaggerated flattery in regard to some woman, it is pretty certain that he is about to commit a folly which he will repent all his life, unless some friendly advice succeeds in warning him in time. It is exceedingly painful for me to sit by and see you in this condition; in fact, I— Ah! good-morning, Randolph; you have come just at the right moment, for I am really quite upset. Something has happened to Clason."

"What is the matter, Tom?" asked Philip, who had just entered our office, and who now stood looking at me from head to foot. "Have

you broken your leg or made an unfortunate speculation?"

"Really," I said with some irritation, "this is too absurd. Harding is either dreaming or crazy; there is nothing whatever the matter with me. I ventured to mention where I had been last evening, and that was quite sufficient to make him go off into a long discussion without head or tail to it, as far as I can see. For the life of me I can't tell what he is driving at. I don't believe he knows himself."

"Something," said Harding, probably addressing Philip, but fixing his eyes steadily upon the mantelpiece, "something has happened to Clason. He has done nothing this morning but stare and sigh in a way that would be ridiculous—yes, positively ridiculous—were it not so very painful to witness. When I questioned him as to the cause of this strange behavior, he began to rave about Fräulein Pumpernikel, or whatever her name is, in the most distressing manner. It has quite upset me, it has indeed—that

is," said Harding, suddenly remembering his theories—"as far as any one with a philosophical tendency can permit himself to be upset. It is very sad."

Whether this last sentence applied to Harding himself or to me, I was unable to determine; but I made no inquiry in reference to it for fear of calling forth another tirade in the same style as the one I had already listened to, and which to me was anything but agreeable. Philip only laughed.

"I think you must be mistaken, Harding," he said. "I see nothing about Tom's manner which can cause the slightest uneasiness in regard to him. By-the-by, I suppose you went to the Germania last night, Tom, judging from what Harding says. How was it? Respectable?"

"Quite so," I replied. "The audience was not composed of the *crême de la crême* of New York society, but it was very well-behaved, and the acting was really excellent, although there is room for improvement in the way of scenery and costumes."

"And Fräulein Altberg?"

"She is very handsome," I answered, glancing at Harding, who was sitting opposite in the most dejected of attitudes. "I don't think I ever saw a more beautiful face."

"What style—blonde or brunette?"

"Brunette decidedly."

Philip frowned. "I can't abide dark-haired Germans," he said. "No German has a right to be anything but blonde. She is young, I suppose?"

"About seven or eight and twenty."

"H'm!" said Philip, reflectively. "Well," he added after a pause, "if they give a downright good comedy, and I have no better engagement, perhaps I may drop in to see her some evening. Would you like to come too, Harding? Now that Tom has made his investigation and discovered that Fräulein Altberg is neither old, nor ugly, nor fat, I feel that I might be able to stand it for once. What do you say?"

Harding moved about uneasily in his chair, and for some moments did not reply.

"Really," he said at last, in a hesitating voice, "since you are both so determined upon going to that second-rate establishment, and since you are bent upon dragging me with you, I suppose there is nothing left for me but to accept. At the same time, I tell you that I heartily disapprove of it nevertheless, and that I am sure I shall be quite unable to reconcile it to my conscience; and now suppose we change the subject."

VI.

"William Tell" continued to be played at the Germania for several nights, during which time I remained steadfastly away, partly because I did not care to see Fräulein Altberg in so unsatisfactory a *rôle* as *Bertha*, and partly because I wished, if possible, to overcome my strange infatuation. Finally, however, when "*Die Anna Lisa*" was substituted for Schiller's masterpiece, I could resist the temptation no longer, and that

evening found me once more installed within the theater. I had counted upon the society of both my friends, but Philip, I discovered, was out of town, somewhat to my surprise, and Harding declared he had an important engagement; so I was compelled to go alone. I met Mr. Wright, however, at the door, just as I was about purchasing my ticket; so we took seats together.

The building was literally packed, and, I must confess, strongly suggestive of Chatham Street; but when the curtain arose, and Fräulein Altberg appeared in all her startling beauty, no surrounding objects had any power to affect me. I would have sat entranced among a mob of rag-pickers, I believe, and been unmindful of their existence, as long as my eyes were fastened upon her exquisite face.

"Not much of a play, is it?" remarked Mr. Wright, when the first act was over.

"I hardly know," I answered; "I am afraid I am not very clever at grasping the situations, my German having become rather rusty. But Fräu-

lein Altberg is perfectly charming, is she not? The character suits her admirably."

"I don't care for her particularly," said Mr. Wright with a vain attempt to suppress a yawn. "There is an expression sometimes about her face that I can't quite make out. I have seen her on several occasions look positively cruel and wicked. Her predecessor, Fräulein Schmidt, who was here last season, was infinitely her superior, in my opinion."

"Cruel and wicked!" I exclaimed. "Why, what can you be thinking of? Surely, if ever there was gentleness and goodness written on any face, it is on hers. She is, I am confident, incapable of any such feeling as you suggest."

"All right!" said my friend good-naturedly; "but spare your enthusiasm, I beg of you, for, no matter what you say, I shall never agree with you."

"Nor I with you," I answered.

Nevertheless, during the next act I examined Fräulein Altberg's face more attentively, if possi-

ble, than I had ever done before, in order to discover if, after all, Mr. Wright had any grounds for his strange suspicion; but I could see nothing but her captivating beauty, which had so fascinated me from the beginning, and which now, I felt, was fast gaining a hold on me that would be difficult to shake off. I must get to know her somehow—but how? There was nobody to introduce me, and I could not go behind the scenes and present myself. Perhaps, if I wrote her a letter soliciting the honor of her acquaintance, she might give her consent; but then again, she might not, and, besides that, I had no possible way of ascertaining her address. The thought was maddening! What should I do? How could I manage it?

"Clason," said Mr. Wright abruptly, "don't lose your head over Fräulein Altberg; I really don't think she's worth it."

"Pray, what do you know about it?" I asked somewhat savagely, for I was beginning to get tired of these continual remonstrances.

"If any one is to be believed on the subject, I am certainly that person," said Mr. Wright, "for I happen to know her exceedingly well."

"You know her!" I exclaimed in such very loud tones that, had the orchestra at that moment not been playing selections from "*The Flying Dutchman*," I should certainly have been overheard by every one within six rows of me. "Why, in Heaven's name, didn't you say so before?"

"Why should I have said so?" inquired Mr. Wright with much dignity; "you never asked me."

"You are just the person I want," I said joyfully. "Here I have been racking my brains in a fruitless endeavor to discover some method of obtaining an introduction, and all the while the very man to do it was sitting right under my nose. It was too bad of you, Wright; you might have known I was dying, yes, actually dying to make her acquaintance. Introduce me like a good fellow, will you?"

"Certainly, since you desire it. But you need

not fly at me in that manner, I am sure. How could I tell you wanted to be introduced? You never said so."

"There are some things in this world," I replied, "which do not require to be spoken of in order to be understood. That was one of them. I can't tell you what a weight you have taken off my mind, Wright. In another hour's time I should have been desperate."

Mr. Wright regarded me with a smile of unmistakable pity. "Clason," he said, "you must not hold me responsible for anything that may occur afterward, if I promise to introduce you."

"What do you mean?"

"Oh! nothing particular. I do not trust Fräulein Altberg, that is all, and I am quite confident that you will be of my opinion before long."

"Never," I replied decidedly. "No one with such a face as that could be deceitful. The idea is simply absurd. I can't imagine what ever made you think of such a thing, Wright."

Mr. Wright shrugged his shoulders.

"Pure fancy, of course," he said. "As far as I know personally, she is an angel; but I cannot help mistrusting her all the same. To be sure, I may be mistaken."

At this moment, the curtain rose upon the third act, and our conversation for the time being was interrupted. Finally, when the play was over, and we turned to go, I felt like a man suddenly awakened from sleep. Mr. Wright must have observed my thoughts to have been elsewhere, for he caught hold of my arm and shook it.

"Clason, are you dreaming?" he asked. "You have not spoken a word for the last hour."

"You really must excuse me, Wright," I answered. "To tell you the truth, I never felt less like talking in my life. I have been rather hard worked lately, and my mind has been a good deal occupied with business matters. We lawyers, you know, have to keep at it pretty steadily." And then, by way of demonstrating to Mr. Wright how very intent I was upon business

matters, I continued: "By-the-by, when will you present me to Fräulein Altberg?"

Mr. Wright looked at me suspiciously, and laughed.

"Let me see," he said. "This is Monday, is it not? Suppose we say next Sunday evening, then; she is always at home on Sunday evening."

"Next Sunday!" I exclaimed, perfectly aghast. "Why, it is a whole week off."

"Can't help that," replied my friend, in a thoroughly unconcerned tone. "She is at the theater every other evening, and you can't pay visits in the daytime, you know."

"Very well, then," I said, "let us say Sunday, since it must be that or nothing. Where and when shall I find you?"

"I am always at the club between eight and nine. I like to drop in for a few moments and see how the games are getting on. But," continued Mr. Wright, suddenly recollecting himself, "there are no games on Sunday, are there? That is really the only objection I have to liv-

ing in America—the Sundays are so infernally stupid. Never mind; I shall wait for you at the club, all the same. Now, good-night, and pray reflect upon what I have told you."

"What rubbish!" I said to myself, almost angrily, as I walked on alone. "What on earth should I reflect about? By Jove! these fellows don't know it, perhaps, but the more they try to dissuade me, the more determined I am to follow my own inclinations in the matter. Why should I not fall in love if I choose to? Everybody does it. It is a disease, I suppose, just like any other; but it has one thing in its favor—it never proves fatal. People may die of the scarlet fever or diphtheria, but who ever heard of any one dying for love? The old notion of broken hearts has, I am happy to say, quite gone out of fashion."

As I made this wise reflection, which I considered quite worthy of Harding himself, I reached my own house, and opening the door with my latch-key, went up-stairs to my room.

A letter was lying on the table. I picked it up and opened it mechanically; it was from Philip.

"Dear Tom," he wrote, "I have been unexpectedly called out of town to arrange some business matters connected with a piece of property of mine in the northern part of the State. I shall not be absent more than ten days at the utmost, and perhaps not quite so long, should all go well.

"I have not forgotten our little engagement to go to the Germania, and shall be prepared to accompany you thither immediately upon my return. Since your enthusiastic description of Fräulein Altberg, I have become quite curious to see her.

"Yours, in haste,

"Philip Randolph."

"And when he does see her," I said, laying the letter down on the table again, and begin-

ning to make my preparations for the night, "when he does see her, he will say just as I did—that she is the loveliest creature in the world."

PART THIRD.

I.

DURING the ensuing week I was preoccupied and thoughtful to an excessive degree, thereby exposing myself continually to Mr. Harding's "theories," as he called them. I did not allow his remarks to trouble me in the least, and this supreme indifference was probably due to the distant but certain prospect of meeting Fräulein Altberg. Harding, however, gradually began to leave off moralizing, and began a series of direct and appropriate inquiries in reference to the charming actress. Whether this was in consequence of my impassibility, or whether it arose from some hidden motive of his own, I am unable to say; but it had the effect of amusing me extremely, for to see Harding interest himself in anything except his profession or his philosophy was some-

thing so unusual, that it was some time before I could reconcile myself to the fact. It was easy to see that slight persuasion would be required to induce him to accompany me to the theater, and I therefore purposely refrained from mentioning the subject, thinking by this means to make his conquest more certain. For a long time, two or three days at least, there was a fierce struggle between his pride and his inclinations, and then the latter finally conquered, as is generally the case.

"Clason," he remarked one morning, "did you not say that Fräulein Altberg was a brunette?"

"A very decided one," I answered.

"I am glad to hear that," said Harding. "Brunettes have a certain fire and enthusiasm about them which blondes entirely lack. I must say I prefer a woman who has some 'go' in her; she is so much better adapted to comprehend one's ideas."

"Can it be possible," I said, "that I hear you mention such vulgar qualities as 'fire' and

'enthusiasm?' Why, Harding, you utterly overwhelm me. What has become of your philosophy? No philosopher can endure such characteristics."

Harding colored in evident embarrassment, and then, as though to cover it, drew himself up stiffly.

"I detest sarcasm," he said, and taking a book from the table, became immediately so immersed in its contents, that I deemed it prudent not to disturb him by further remarks.

Business occupied us until late in the afternoon, and when at last our work was over for the day, Harding and I left the office together, as was generally our custom.

I intentionally avoided making any allusion to Fräulein Altberg, but Harding was determined not to leave me in peace.

"What do they play to-night at the Germania?" he inquired languidly. "Some blood and thunder drama, I suppose. I say, Clason," turning toward me and speaking almost in a

whisper, "do they come out in boots and broad hats with plumes, and act in that unhand-me-villain sort of manner? because, if they do, I don't think I could sit it out even for once."

"Who wants you to sit it out?" I asked ungraciously. "You have no intention of going, have you?"

"That Bowery style of performance never was to my taste," continued Harding, paying no heed to my remark. "I have always considered it so inexpressibly ill-bred. Even when I was a child, I never could bear to see such representations; Shakespeare's plays were the only ones I could tolerate, and by the time I was twelve years old, I was able to recite almost the whole of Hamlet by heart. I remember hearing people say I had a wonderful memory, and time, I rejoice to say, has not impaired it in the least. Now, in regard to the drama—why can't we have something after the manner of the ancient Greeks? I am quite sure it would be success-

ful. People are just beginning to have some perception of classical literature, and any tendency in that direction should be warmly encouraged. Greek plays would, I think, in time become quite the rage."

"Very likely," I replied. "As far as I myself am concerned, however, I must confess that I prefer any other kind. The modern French school, for instance."

Harding shuddered.

"Horrible!" he said. "So morbidly sensational? Emotion is the natural characteristic of the French nation, just as it is predominant in all people inhabiting southern climates; and it is precisely this quality which is ruining them. Great thinkers nowadays are not, as a general thing, born in those countries; they come from Germany, from England, or from any other place where emotional qualities are comparatively unknown. It is very painful to one of my nature to see this school so popular here, for it is the thing of all others to be avoided. Its

effect upon the nation is degenerating and degrading in the fullest extent."

"Perhaps it is," I said. "Anything that is entertaining and amusing is morally bad, is it not?"

Harding reflected for a moment.

"No," he said at last, "I do not think that. Greek plays, to me, are very amusing—so are Shakespeare's—but I would not think of questioning their morality. Perhaps, though, our ideas may differ as to what really constitutes amusement and morality. Now, what is your definition of amusement?"

"Not Greek plays, certainly," I said. "And now, Harding, suppose we stop here, for I have a faint suspicion that you are trying to entrap me into an argument, and you know from experience that I cannot argue for ten minutes without flying into a violent rage. So why do you tempt me?"

"Yes," said Harding, "I have frequently observed, much to my regret, that you allow the

merest trifle to interfere with your self-control. This being the case, we ought certainly to keep aloof from discussions, for it is very painful for me to witness any such exhibition."

We walked on for a little while in silence; then Harding spoke again.

"Did you say Fräulein Altberg's figure was good, Clason?"

"Perfect."

"Nothing fat about her?"

"Good gracious, no!"

Another silence—Harding was apparently turning over something in his mind, and evidently unable to come to any satisfactory determination. We had almost reached the point where we usually separated to go our respective ways, when he suddenly turned toward me, and in the glare of a street-lamp which we were at that moment passing, I could see that the color in his face had deepened considerably.

"Clason," he said, "I have no engagement for this evening; so, if you care to have me join

you, I think I will go with you to the theater. It is not much in my line, you know, but I think if I see this—this person who seems to have turned your head so completely, I would understand better how to give you advice on the subject, and—"

"Never mind the advice, Harding," I said, laughing; "you have given me quite enough already—but of course I would be delighted to have you accompany me, if you are quite sure it will not interfere with anything of a more pleasing nature you may have on hand."

"N–o, I think not. At any rate, drop in at the St. James's for me about eight o'clock. Good-by."

He hurried off, as though anxious to escape further conversation upon the subject, and I was really quite at a loss to comprehend him. What did he mean? A few days ago, when Philip had declared his intention of going to the theater, Harding had come to the conclusion that he would join us; and yet, when I had invited him

to accompany me on the following evening, he had pleaded an engagement. Since then, I had not repeated my request, thinking that perhaps, after all, he did not really care to go; but I soon discovered that this was in no wise the case. His constant remarks in reference to Fräulein Altberg and the theater soon proved to me that the subject was uppermost in his mind, and that, notwithstanding his philosophical theories, he was just as anxious to satisfy his curiosity in regard to the young lady as Philip was. This was rather surprising, for Harding was not given to show any special inclination for anything, and while his sudden fancy amused me excessively, I was secretly rejoiced that at last something had occurred to rouse him from the absurd lethargy into which he had fallen.

When we entered the theater together that evening, I found, much to my astonishment, that Harding had relapsed once more into his former languid manner, and that not the slightest trace of his momentary enthusiasm remained. I took

it for granted that he was ashamed of his weakness, and was seeking to make up for it by being doubly calm and impenetrable.

The play was still "*Die Anna Lisa*"—one which I liked particularly, as Fräulein Altberg was on the stage continually, from the beginning to the end. As the curtain rose and she appeared before the audience, I glanced apprehensively toward my companion, in order to observe the effect her marvelous beauty produced upon him. To my utter disgust, his face expressed nothing whatever—neither pleasure, nor disappointment, nor surprise.

"Harding," I said, in an excited whisper, "why, in Heaven's name, don't you say something?"

"What do you want me to say?" he inquired calmly.

"I want you to tell me what you think of her. Is she not superb?"

"Good-looking enough," said Harding. "At any rate, she is fifty times better than that fat

party who was here ten years ago. I cannot endure the sight of a fat woman."

"If that is all you can say," I exclaimed wrathfully, "you had much better have stayed at home. One might as well go to the theater with a log of wood as with you. It may be very philosophical," I continued, waxing more enraged every moment, "but it's damned disagreeable."

Mr. Harding raised his eyebrows slightly.

"Clason," he said, "such vehemence is extremely unbecoming. If you are going to make a scene in the theater before everybody, let me know at once, and I shall leave."

"Do," I said. "You would probably enjoy yourself much better at home, reading Darwin's Origin of the Human Species, and I should be infinitely better off without you, since you can do nothing but make unpleasant remarks."

"On second thoughts," said Harding, "I think I shall stay and see it out. That woman who has just come on the stage pleases me rather. By the way, who is she?"—taking up his programme

and reading the names of the characters: "Let me see. *Anna Lisa*, Fräulein Altberg; *Henriette*, Frau Kopp—beastly name, Kopp; *Maria*, Fräulein Tohmann. I suppose she must be Maria, is she not, Clason? She looks like Maria."

I was too indignant to answer.

"Much better style than Fräulein Altberg," continued Harding. "Her complexion is infinitely superior. Fräulein Altberg's has a yellowish tinge about it that is rather suggestive of jaundice. I am sure she must have had jaundice, Clason. If I ever get to know her, I shall ask her."

"Be quiet," I said in a voice choked with rage. "Don't you see everybody looking at you? You may possibly not care to hear what is said on the stage, but, no doubt, some others do; so be kind enough to reserve your remarks for a more fitting occasion."

Harding put out one hand with an imploring gesture. "Do not begin to rant and rave like a madman, Clason, simply because my ideas

do not happen to coincide with yours. Every man is entitled to his own opinions—keep yours, and I will keep mine—only don't, I beg of you, make a scene. I have such a horror of scenes."

I did not reply, and for the remainder of the evening hardly a word was exchanged between us. I knew it was unreasonable in me to take offense merely because Harding did not admire Fräulein Altberg, and yet the very fact of my being unreasonable only seemed to increase my ill-humor. Harding perceived this, and wisely let me alone.

As we turned to leave the theater, at the close of the performance, I continued to maintain dead silence. I could not speak of the play, and to speak of anything else was an impossibility. Harding, however, was as cool and collected as ever. As I looked at him, I had a horrible suspicion that he was inwardly amused at my ill-temper.

"Good-night, Clason," he said, when we reached the street. "It was really much better than I

expected, and that Fräulein Tohmann who plays Maria is a beauty. If you intend to go again to-morrow night, let me know, will you?—for I should quite like to see her again."

II.

The next day was Saturday. Harding and I remained at daggers'-points during the entire day, never addressing each other unless absolute necessity required it, and then only in the briefest and most concise terms. The anger was undoubtedly all on my side, for Harding never allowed anything to ruffle the calm serenity of his mind in the slightest degree, and this only served to augment my rage. Why did he not speak? What did he mean by sitting there and never mentioning Fräulein Altberg, or the theater, or anything else? I did not reflect that, had he done so, I should, in all probability, either have paid no attention to his remarks, or else have answered them in the most ungracious fashion.

Nevertheless, it was very uncomfortable, and my temper was by no means improved when the afternoon mail brought me a second letter from Philip, in which he announced that it would be absolutely impossible for him to leave at present, and that we must not look for him for another week at the earliest. I tossed the letter down with such an angry gesture that Harding looked up in mute wonder. "Now," I thought, "he is certainly going to say something," and for once in my life I was not mistaken.

"My dear friend," he remarked, in the softest possible tones, "may I inquire the meaning of those extraordinary gymnastics?"

"It is smply disgusting," I cried, rising from my chair, and pacing the floor with rapid strides. "Read that!" and I threw Philip's letter into his lap.

Harding picked it up, opened it leisurely, and began to read. When he had finished, he laid it down beside him on the table, and calmly folded his hands.

"Well?" he said.

"What do you mean by 'well'?" I exclaimed. "It is not well at all; it is very bad, vile, atrocious. Don't you know that I am waiting to take Philip to the Germania with me, and that if he had arrived this evening, as I expected, I had intended to ask Wright to introduce him as well as me to Fräulein Altberg to-morrow? No, of course you don't; you never know anything."

"Since you feel in that way about it," said Harding, "let me tell you that you shall not go alone, Clason. I shall have the extreme happiness (that is the correct term, is it not?) of accompanying you myself."

"Not if I know it," I said with charming candor. "I had quite enough of that last night, thank you."

"I shall be sorry to disappoint you, Clason," said Harding, apparently absorbed in looking at the tips of his fingers, "but, if you seriously object to my society, I am afraid you will have to stay at home, for I am certainly going. I met

Wright this morning, and he invited me to join you."

"What!" I cried, wheeling suddenly round, unable to believe my own ears. "He asked you too? And did you accept?"

"Most certainly I did. Why should I not? Probably Fräulein Tohmann may be there."

"Fräulein Fiddlesticks!" I said crossly. "Look here, Harding, you know perfectly well that you no more admire that woman than you admire a—a blackamoor. If you are bent upon going with us to-morrow evening, it is to see Fräulein Altberg, and no one else—and it's my firm belief that you are in love with her yourself, only your devilish pride prevents you from saying so."

"Hush!" said Harding, holding up both hands in horror. "Don't, pray, mention such a thing. In love! Why, my dear fellow, the very word makes me shudder. Nobody nowadays falls in love except chambermaids and butlers. No gentleman or lady ever does

such a thing. It is quite fearful to contemplate."

"Pooh!" I said contemptuously, "that sort of talk won't go down with me, Harding, so you may as well stop it at once. Of course, you can go with us to-morrow if you wish. What do I care? You have my full permission to go every evening as long as you live, if you choose; only, I warn you beforehand that if you begin to say anything disrespectful of Fräulein Altberg, I will never speak to you again—never!"

"Dear me!" said Harding. "This is all very unnecessary. When will you learn to be less violent, Clason? Anybody seeing you this afternoon would take you to be an escaped lunatic. I assure you they would. Do be calm, I beg of you. It is distressing to see a person have so little control over himself. Of course I shall make no disparaging remarks about Fräulein Altberg. I hope I am too much of a gentleman for that."

"Certainly you are," I said, my good humor

suddenly returning. "You are a brick, Harding, when you talk common sense. Don't mind my ill-temper."

"It isn't that," said Harding. "As far as I am personally concerned, your temper makes very little difference. It is the exhibition of it that troubles me—it is so very painful to see any one lose his self-command. I can't tell you how it upsets me. I knew a man once who had such a frightful temper that he used to turn green in the face, and fairly dance with rage; and, Clason," he continued, lowering his voice, "my contempt for that man was so great that if murder was not such an exceedingly undignified action, I really think I should have killed him. He was a most sickening person." And Mr. Harding, having delivered this inhuman speech, arranged his papers upon the table, and began to write deliberately.

The following evening, after dinner, we made our way to the club in search of Mr. Wright.

He was engaged, the waiter said, with one or two gentlemen up-stairs, but would be down in a few moments—and presently he did appear, sauntering into the room with his hat under his arm, smoking a cigarette.

"Have you come into a fortune, Clason?" was his greeting to me, as he extended two fingers to Harding. "I never saw you look so radiant."

"Then you have never seen me on Sunday," I replied, "for I am always radiant on Sunday. It is the only day in the week that I am free to amuse myself as I please. I hate to work, but, inasmuch as I have the tastes of a millionaire, and the income of a mechanic, it is unavoidable. It is very sad, as Harding would say."

"If that is really the case, it is indeed," said Mr. Wright, laughing. "But let us be off; it's getting late."

"I trust," said Harding, as we walked down the street together, "that Fräulein Altberg speaks English, otherwise I shall be compelled to remain silent during my visit; and so will

Clason, I am sure, for, with all his boasted learning, I do not believe he understands a single word of German. Now, do you, Clason?"

"You need not be uneasy," said Mr. Wright. "Fräulein Altberg speaks English as well as you do. She was educated in England, I believe. She has the most bewitching little accent imaginable."

In a few moments we reached the hotel where the young lady resided, and were shown to a suite of rooms on the ground-floor. Mr. Wright, who seemed to be quite *au fait* in all matters pertaining to the establishment, advanced toward a door and opened it. A flood of gaslight nearly blinded us as we entered, but we could distinguish the charming actress at once, seated at one end of the room, talking with some very ordinary-looking man. She rose immediately and advanced to meet us, and, as she did so, I could feel my heart thumping so violently beneath my dress-coat that I almost feared some one would hear it. Mr. Wright made the neces-

sary introductions, and then, taking Harding by the arm, led him to a corner where a very stout old lady was sitting. The old lady bowed graciously, and, pointing to a chair, invited him with a smile to sit down, which he did, and in this way I found myself standing alone with Fräulein Altberg. What was it that made a sudden faintness come over me? How very stupid! It must be the flowers, for the whole room was filled with them. My hands, too, became icy cold, and I felt the blood rush to my face. I tried to say something, but the words would not come; my very tongue seemed to cleave to the roof of my mouth, and, for an instant, every object in the room danced before my eyes; then I became suddenly aware that Fräulein Altberg was speaking to me.

"Shall we not sit down?" she said softly, with just the slightest foreign accent in her tones. "It is so much more comfortable than standing up."

I recovered myself at once, and followed her to a *causeuse* which stood in the middle of the

apartment directly beneath the chandelier. She was even more beautiful than I had imagined. She was perfectly dressed in some soft white material, cut a little open in the throat, and fastened at the waist by a bouquet of scarlet roses. As I looked into her glorious dark eyes, whose brilliancy was more heightened than usual by a faint tinge of color in her cheeks, I felt that from that moment I was a lost man.

"Your face is very familiar to me, Mr. Clason," she said. "Have we not met somewhere before?"

"I think not," I replied. "You may, perhaps, have seen me at the theater—that is, if you ever notice an individual face among the crowd—for I am one of your ardent admirers, Fräulein Altberg. This is, however, I am sure, the first time we have spoken together."

"Ah! yes," she said; "it must have been at the theater, of course. Are you fond of the theater?"

"I am very fond of the Germania, and of seeing you act," I answered. "I cannot say I am much of a theater-goer otherwise." She laughed.

"Why do you pay me compliments?" she asked. "I am so tired of compliments. Now, if you want to please me, talk of anything else except the theater. I will tell you a secret," she added, bending toward me and speaking in a low voice. "I hate the theater—yes, I positively hate it."

"You cannot be speaking seriously," I said, "or else I am a very poor observer. Each time that I have seen you act, you seemed to throw your whole soul into your part."

"It is not that," she said, speaking quickly, and glancing toward the man with whom she had been talking when we came in. "I love my art, and my soul *is* in it; but I detest that miserable German theater. I am very ambitious, Mr. Clason, and I should like to act at one of the first theaters in New York. What good does it do me to exhibit my talent before people who are incapable of appreciating it?"

"Surely you are mistaken on that point," I said reassuringly. "The audiences that I have

seen *do* appreciate you. Whatever is German, is always understood by Germans." Then, feeling that this remark was not quite as brilliant as I could wish it to be, I added hastily, "They are not fashionable people, certainly, but they are undoubtedly intelligent."

"I should not, perhaps, have said, they do not appreciate me," said Fräulein Altberg; "but I have an utter contempt for them. I want to act at a fashionable theater, before an audience composed of ladies and gentlemen, instead of music-teachers and shop-keepers."

"Well," I said, "and why do you not? You could easily get an engagement at any theater, I should think, and your English is so perfect that I doubt if any one would ever take you for a foreigner."

"It is impossible," she said. "I have signed a contract with Herr Schmidt, to remain with him for four years, and he will never let me break it."

"Of course he won't, unless he is an idiot," I

thought. Then aloud: "And pray, who is Herr Schmidt?—your manager?"

"Yes, that is he, standing yonder talking to Mr. Wright. A charming fellow, Mr. Wright, is he not?"

"Oh! very," I said amiably, although the particular charm with which Mr. Wright was endowed had never struck me forcibly. "And now tell me the name of the lady with whom my friend Mr. Harding is speaking."

"That is my mother."

I was rather surprised at this answer; a friend or companion she certainly might be—but her mother! I cast a scrutinizing glance in the direction of this lady, whose person was of such very generous proportions that many details must have escaped me in my superficial examination. I saw, however, that she was enormously stout, very vulgar, and very much overdressed. She was laughing violently at that moment, and evidently relating something exceedingly funny to poor Harding, who was sitting by her side in

a woe-begone attitude, a sickly smile overspreading his countenance, looking like a caricature of some East Indian deity.

I inwardly enjoyed his discomfiture—very unfeeling of me, no doubt—but I was so happy myself that my keen sense of the ridiculous was more vivid than usual, and the sight of my unfortunate friend imprisoned in a corner with that terrible woman, while I basked in the society of the fascinating *artiste*, was almost more than I could gaze upon with becoming gravity.

"What are you thinking of, Mr. Clason?" asked Fräulein Altberg suddenly.

"Nothing of any consequence," I stammered, rather at a loss what to answer. "I was only thinking how very unlike you and your mother are; I should never have imagined you to be her daughter."

"And why?"

"Oh! because—because your figures are so very different, and your coloring and all that, don't you know?" I said brilliantly, becoming

more confused as I saw her eyes fixed upon me with rather an amused expression.

"Yes," she answered presently, "we do not resemble each other in the least. But will you not allow me to present you to her? I believe the ceremony of introduction was overlooked when you came in."

"Oh! certainly," I murmured, inwardly cursing the inspiration which had led me to mention her mother at all. "Charmed, I am sure."

She rose from her seat, and I followed her to the corner from which Harding's eyes glanced up at me imploringly. Madame Altberg saw us approaching, and drew herself into position, so to speak, in anticipation of the introduction.

"Mamma," said Fräulein Altberg, "let me present Mr. Clason to you."

The old lady bowed affably, and extended a fat hand, which I pretended, however, not to see. Harding instantly rose, and motioned me to take his seat, at the same time addressing some trifling remark to Fräulein Altberg. There was no

help for it; so, casting a furious glance at my friend, I turned to *Madame Mère*, who was eyeing me benignantly, and waiting patiently for me to take Harding's vacant chair. This, however, I was determined not to do; so I remained standing by her side, twisting the ends of my mustache, and feeling anything but comfortable.

"I did not quite catch your name," said Madame Altberg, with the strongest of German accents. "Did I understand my daughter to say Grayson or Mason?"

"Neither, madame; my name is Clason."

"Ah, so!"—the last syllable drawn out as only a German can draw it. "I once knew a person of that name, an American, living in London—John Clason, he was, and he kept a little dry-goods shop in the Strand. A relation of yours, perhaps?"

"None at all," I said in an indignant tone, and drawing myself up stiffly.

Madame Altberg was utterly unconscious,

nevertheless, of having made any *faux pas*, and continued good-naturedly:

"You have seen my daughter act, Mr. Clason, I suppose. Now, what do you think of her?"

"Your daughter is everything that is charming," I answered, looking about me in a vain attempt to discover some loop-hole of escape from this terrible person. Suddenly, my face lighted up. Mr. Wright had finished his conversation with Herr Schmidt, and was saying good-evening to Fräulein Altberg, as also was Harding. In another moment they approached my corner, and I took immediate advantage of this to bow hurriedly to Madame Altberg, and proceed to make my *adieux* to her daughter.

"Good-night, Mr. Clason," said the latter pleasantly. "I trust that, now you have found your way here, we shall have the pleasure of seeing you often. We are always at home on Sundays."

"And at no other time," I ventured, encour-

aged by the glance she suddenly gave me from beneath her long black lashes.

"I do not know. Why do you ask?"

"Because," I answered, waxing bolder, "I should so much prefer seeing you alone than among all these people. Tell me, when may I come?" I added hurriedly, seeing my two friends advancing toward me.

"Let me see," hesitating an instant, and then half laughing. "Well, then, if you really wish it, you may come on Tuesday afternoon, at four o'clock."

"Thanks," I said simply. "Good-evening, Fräulein Altberg," and I bowed and took my departure.

We did not say much to each other that evening, for, as we left the hotel, each of us went in a different direction; so, merely thanking Mr. Wright for the pleasure he had afforded us, Harding and I separated and went in search of our respective homes.

III.

It was easy to see, from the expression of Harding's face as he entered our office the next morning, that something had gone wrong with him. An unusually sad look overspread his features, and even his walk bespoke a dejected frame of mind. I, myself, was in radiant spirits; everything had that charming *couleur de rose* aspect which pervades surrounding objects when we are particularly happy, and I felt that, after all, life had charms whose existence could never be appreciated, or even known, until the heart had been touched by the tender passion. That mine had been so touched, I did not doubt for an instant, and I ceased to regret that such was the case when I contemplated the delights which apparently were in store for me. Yes, I was certainly a very lucky fellow, and so happy, that even Harding's lugubrious countenance failed to impress me.

"Good-morning, Harding," I remarked jovially.

"Have you recovered from last night's dissipation?"

Harding put out his hands beseechingly. "Don't," he said; "I'm ill, very ill."

"Ill! Why, what is the matter?"

"You know," said he; "you were there; you saw her"—and he passed his hand over his eyes as though to shut out the recollection. "If I had known," he continued, "of the existence of that frightful person, there is nothing, absolutely nothing, that would have induced me to go there. I shall never forgive Wright to my dying day. He might have told me."

"Told you what?" I inquired. "What are you driving at?"

Harding did not reply for some moments. He took up a paper-knife from the table, and began to examine it leisurely.

"I shall never go there again," he said presently. "Fräulein Altberg is all very well in her way, I suppose—but the mother! Clason, what *do* you think of the mother?"

"She is not the most attractive person I have ever seen, I admit," I answered. "Just fancy, Harding"—suddenly recalling my outraged feelings of the previous evening—"she actually asked me if I was related to Somebody-or-other Clason who kept a shop in London. She did, upon my word."

"That," said Harding, decidedly, "is nothing in comparison with what she said to me. She wanted to know if I was in "the profession," and when I replied that I hoped not, she said that I certainly looked as if I was. Just imagine such a thing! It is too dreadful."

"Never mind," I said cheerfully. "What else could you expect of such a vulgar person? The only thing that astonishes me is how she came to be Fräulein Altberg's mother. *She* is certainly refined and lady-like, and as lovely as her mother is unlovely."

"If you had studied more, Clason," said Harding, "that would astonish you but little. The laws of physiology do not command that a

child should look like its mother, or like its father. I once saw a very perfectly formed couple who had ten humpbacked children, and, upon investigation, it was discovered that, several generations back, one of the father's ancestors had been adorned with a similar embellishment—two, in all probability. Fräulein Altberg resembles some distant great-great-uncle or grandfather—taking it for granted, of course, that she has had a grandfather. All this, my dear Clason, is very well known to scientific men; there is some special term, in fact, used to designate this very thing. I have forgotten exactly what it is, for the moment, but I will think over it and let you know. It is a most interesting study."

There was a pause for a few moments, and then Harding continued:

"I shall never forget, during the whole course of my life," he said, "that horrible half hour spent in the society of that vulgar creature. You know, to begin with, I cannot abide a fat woman

—and *such* a fat woman! Did you notice her costume, Clason? Cotton-backed satin! Just think of it! Can there be anything more atrocious than cotton-backed satin?" and Harding sank back in his chair as though overcome by the reminiscence.

"Don't be absurd," I said. "Did you expect to see her clad in Worth's latest novelty? You have seen German women before—you know how they dress themselves. Fräulein Altberg is the only exception to the rule I have ever met with."

"You cannot understand, Clason," said Harding, fixing his eyes gloomily upon the opposite wall, "how a person of my esthetic sensibility is affected by such inharmonious details. I might possibly have forgiven the cotton-back satin, and the wonderful way in which it was made; but when it came to her hands incased in blue kid gloves and several rings—*rings*," repeated Mr. Harding with emphasis, "worn on the outside of them—I felt that my peace of mind was de-

stroyed for a week to come. By the way, Clason," with just the faintest touch of curiosity in his voice, "what were you and Fräulein Altberg talking about?"

"Really, I do not remember," I said, wisely intending to keep my own counsel. "The usual things, I suppose—the weather and the theaters."

"How very commonplace," said Harding. "Now, I never think of mentioning such topics. They belong, properly speaking, to the vulgar crowd, who are capable of comprehending nothing of a more substantial nature. I only had a few moments' conversation with Fräulein Altberg last evening, but those few moments were of an excessively interesting and attractive character."

"What did *you* talk about, may I ask?" I inquired, trying to appear as unconcerned as possible.

"A most entertaining subject," said Harding. "I ventured to ask Fräulein Altberg her opinion in regard to the theory of evolution, and

where she thought the missing link between monkey and man was likely to be found."

"And what did she say?" I asked curiously.

"She gave me a most peculiar reply," said Harding. "She said, she thought it would not be necessary to search very far for the missing link. What do you think she meant, Clason? I have been wondering ever since, and cannot discover, to save my life. I have read all the latest scientific works upon the subject, and I do not remember their mentioning any prospect of the missing link making himself known to humanity."

"How do I know what she meant?" I said, with difficulty repressing a smile as I contemplated Harding's extreme simple-mindedness. "Very likely she was thinking of her mother—I should not be surprised."

"Oh! then it was intended for a joke!" said Harding. "Dear me! I am quite disappointed. I thought her reply was purely scientific. Very bad taste, don't you think so, Clason?"

"I do not know, I am sure," I answered. "I am only surmising as to her meaning. She may have intended her reply to be scientific, and she may not. What earthly difference does it make?"

"Dear me!" said Harding again. "How very strange!" and a client at that moment entering the office, put an end for the time being to our conversation, much to my delight, for I was too full of my own hopes and plans to pay much attention to the vague speculations of my companion.

Tuesday afternoon seemed a long way off. How I wished she had said Monday! And Philip, why did he not come back, that I might present him to my charming *artiste?* He, I was sure, would understand and appreciate her many virtues and attractions better than any one else. How very extraordinary, too, that Fräulein Altberg's nature should be in such evident sympathy with mine; and yet, when I came to think of it, it was quite natural, after all. Had not some unknown and powerful attraction led me to

the theater? Had I not known almost certainly, before I had even seen her, that she was young, beautiful, and fascinating? And what had been my feelings when I did see her? What, indeed, but a sudden intoxication, which swept over me from head to foot, leaving me dreamy, preoccupied, thoughtful, and uncertain of myself. Taking all this into consideration, was it surprising that she should fancy my society and encourage it? Could all the intensity of emotion I had undergone have possibly been wasted upon a nature not in harmony with my own? Certainly not. Surely, she and I were made for each other, if ever two people were; and if she loved me truly, I would marry her to-morrow, in spite of conventionalities and all the formal barriers of society. What did I care for society? Had it ever given me anything beyond the mere pastime of an hour? Why should I stop to think of that or anything? If she loved me, I would marry her—yes, I would marry her, had she fifty mothers, and should she act at the Germania

as long as she lived. Philip would laugh at the idea, perhaps, and Harding would be horribly shocked. Well, let them. I was a free man and could do as I chose, and on this point I was decided to have my own way, as far as lay in my power. Life, after all, was so short, and our hours of happiness so few and far between—so few and far between!

IV.

Tuesday afternoon finally arrived, and at four o'clock, punctually, I entered Fräulein Altberg's hotel—not without some agitation, however, for the thought of seeing her alone, of having her all to myself, even for one brief hour, was sufficient to overwhelm me with joy.

I was shown immediately to her private parlor, and told that she would appear in a few moments. I sat down upon one end of the *causeuse*, and, in order to distract my thoughts and gain more composure, began to look about

me, examining every detail of the room with the interest and curiosity always displayed by a man who finds himself alone in the apartment of the woman he loves. There were flowers everywhere—on the tables, on the grand piano, on the mantel-piece. There was a photograph of Fräulein Altberg herself, in a gilded frame, standing close by me, and another of Herr Schmidt; several albums, too, filled with portraits of intensely German-looking people—and that was all! Of my fair *artiste*, personally, there was no indication. No half-open book, no sheet of music tossed carelessly upon the piano,—nothing but the photograph on the table which gave any sign of her former presence. I took it up and looked at it. It was an excellent likeness, and as I gazed at it, I tried to imagine the sweet, tender eyes were looking into mine, and could almost fancy they did—so often does our conception assume a tangible form in proportion as our inclination directs it. So absorbed was I in contemplating the exquisite form and features

represented upon the morsel of pasteboard in my hand, that I did not hear the door open, nor had I any idea of Fräulein Altberg's actual presence in the room until she stood close beside me. Then I started and colored furiously, like a school-boy caught in some trifling misdemeanor.

"Good-morning, Mr. Clason," she said, taking no notice of my embarrassment, or of the portrait I held still in my hand. "Pardon me for keeping you waiting, but I was detained unavoidably by Mr. Schmidt, who was with me when you came, talking over some theater business. I cannot tell you how glad I was to escape from it, and to look forward to a pleasant chat with you." And with a smile she threw herself down rather wearily on one end of the *causeuse*, and motioned me to take my seat on the other. "I hardly knew whether to expect you or not, Mr. Clason," she continued; "business men, you know, have so seldom any time they can call their own."

"No business could have interfered with my

keeping my engagement with you," I answered. "It was so very kind of you to let me come—so much more than I had any right to hope for; you cannot know how I appreciate it."

"It was no kindness, indeed, Mr. Clason. I am afraid it was a purely selfish motive which led me to give you the permission you asked for. The few moments' conversation we had together the other evening were sufficient to show me that you were a most congenial companion, and that we had many sympathies in common. Kindred spirits," she added with a little laugh, "are not so plentiful that we can afford to throw them away. Don't you think so?"

"Most certainly not," I answered; "and you are quite right when you say we are kindred spirits. I felt that we were the moment I looked at you. The first time I saw you, you were playing *William Tell*, and I shall never forget the impression you made upon me. It was like a fleeting glimpse of Paradise. I say fleeting," I continued, smiling, "because your ap-

pearances upon the stage were rather spasmodic, were they not? You no sooner came on than you went off again."

"Don't speak of it," she answered. "I cannot endure that play. It was a shame for Herr Schmidt to give me such a *rôle;* it was nothing—absolutely nothing. How could you have sat it out? But here we are again speaking of the theater—a topic that must be instantly put under taboo, if you wish me to retain my good humor."

"Very well, then," I said, "let us change the subject. Suppose you tell me how you came to speak English so well. It is not usual to hear a German talking our difficult tongue with so little foreign accent."

"I lived many years in England," she answered, "and have been nearly a year now in New York. I have not seen Germany for ever so long; not since I was eighteen. Shall I tell you how I came to go to England?—it is rather an interesting story. When I was quite a little girl, I used to be very fond of studying the

works of our great poets—Goethe, Schiller, Heine, and Uhland. I was only a peasant, Mr. Clason, —yes," she continued, noticing my involuntary look of surprise, "I was only a simple German peasant; but peasants in my country love the poets and great writers of the nation, and are familiar with their books. It is not as it is in England, where very often you find people among the poorer classes who have never heard of Shakespeare. No; our poets are our household gods, and we worship them as such. One summer evening, when I was between seventeen and eighteen, I recited Schiller's beautiful *Lied von der Glocke* to a few of the neighbors. All the windows were open on account of the heat, and a gentleman passing by stopped to listen. When I had finished, he came into my little room, and, after asking me a few questions about myself, inquired whether I had ever thought of going on the stage. My face flushed at the idea—it had been the dream of my life—but, alas! how could it ever be possible without either friends or

money? I told this to the kind Englishman—I saw at once that he was English—in trembling tones, and I could hardly believe my senses when, after a little more questioning, he said that, if I were willing, he would take me with him far away to England and educate me for the stage. I was almost wild with happiness; it was some time before I could realize the good fortune which had so suddenly come to me; but my kind benefactor was as good as his word, and we went immediately to England, where I was given the best instruction the country could afford. I studied for nine years, for I was deficient in everything; I really do not think I knew anything, having had no advantages beyond the common-school education every child receives in Germany; and then my kind friend died, and soon after I came across Herr Schmidt, who engaged me to come to America. Now, Mr. Clason," she continued, "you know all about me, and will be able to say whether I have improved my opportunities or not."

"Indeed you have," I said, looking at her so earnestly that her eyes sank beneath my gaze, and a faint color stole into her cheeks. "I really feel very kindly disposed toward the old English gentleman myself, for, had he not carried you off to England, we should probably never have met, and this charming *tête-à-tête* would have been *non est.* Tell me frankly, would my not coming to-day have made any difference to you —just the least bit in the world? Do not say it would unless it is really so," I added hastily. "I assure you I shall not mind."

As I had spoken, I had bent gradually toward her, until her face almost touched mine, and I could see how long were the lashes that fringed her dusky eyes — those long, almond-shaped oriental eyes, which had so bewitched me from the first. Presently she raised their heavy white lids, and now, they were looking straight into mine with a soft, dreamy expression that almost took away my breath as I encountered it.

"Why do you ask me?" she said gently. "You *know* that it would—do you not?"

"There is but one thing that I know," I said, speaking in a low, passionate whisper, "and that is that, since I saw you first, not two weeks ago, you have grown to be a part of my life. I do not believe in fate," I continued hurriedly; "that is, I never have believed in it before; but surely it was something of that kind which led me to you. I cannot tell you what the feeling was, more than that it was an irresistible impulse—an impulse which I had not the power to fight against. I tried not to yield to it, but it was too strong for me, and since that first night at the Germania I had but one thought—to know you, to sit by your side, to hear your voice speaking to me alone. Tell me, was I wrong—was I mad—ever to imagine you could think of me in a different way than you do of Mr. Wright and the others? Tell me—tell me!" and, without waiting for her answer, I seized one of her little hands and began to cover it with kisses.

"Mr. Clason," said Fräulein Altberg, making no attempt to withdraw her hand, but speaking in a low, troubled voice, "I hardly know what to say to you—you have taken me so by surprise. Probably, at some future time, it is not unlikely that I should care for you—you are not like the other men that I have known, and the first moment I saw you I felt we might become very dear friends. Do not, however, ask me for more than that at present."

"As you please," I said quite calmly, thinking that perhaps I had been too hasty. "I will wait patiently until you tell me I may speak again; only do not send me away from you, do not say you can never care for me—for if you do you will drive me to despair."

Fräulein Altberg recovered herself a little and laughed. "There will be no occasion for you to be brought to that lamentable pass," she said; "at least, I trust not; only you must not hurry me—you must give me time to think—a great deal of time."

"Do not make it any longer than is absolutely necessary," I said pleadingly. "Think of the lonely life I lead—hard-worked all day, and no loving words to repay me, no cheerful face to greet me on my return home. You do not know what it is, Fräulein Altberg—you, who are always surrounded by friends, and living in the excitement of a public life—you cannot know what it is for a man, situated as I am, to long for a companion who might be always beside him, a wife to cheer him in his darker hours as well as in happier ones."

I was speaking earnestly now, without a trace of the wild emotion which had suddenly swept over me a moment before. Fräulein Altberg bent quickly forward, with an expression upon her face I had never yet seen there. What was it—happiness or triumph? Before I could determine its precise meaning, it had vanished, and her features resumed their natural appearance; but it had taken me somewhat aback, nevertheless.

"Your wife! Mr. Clason," she said slowly; "do you really want me to be your wife?"

"Have I not told you so?" I cried. "Have I not said you are the one woman the world contains for me? Yes, I do want you for my wife; for my very own—always—always," and once more I tried to take her hand, but she drew back.

"And your friends," she said a little anxiously; "what would *they* say to your marrying an actress from the German theater—a woman without position, without family—a woman who is not even at the head of her profession? No, you cannot mean it."

"I *do* mean it," I said. "What do I care what any one thinks? It is you I want—only you; all else is of but little consequence."

"Give me time to think," she said; "I cannot answer you now; I cannot, indeed, Mr. Clason. And now I think we must say good-by, for it is getting late, and I have my preparations to make for the theater. You may come again in two or

three days, if you like, and then, perhaps—mind, I only say *perhaps*—I may tell you something you will like to hear. "*Auf wiedersehen, lieber Freund,*" and in another moment she had extended her hand to me, and then was gone before I had time to utter a word.

V.

"Harding," I said with startling abruptness, "how do I look?"

We were sitting together in our office, the morning following my visit to Fräulein Altberg. I had been gradually swelling with a sense of my own importance, and at the same time patiently waiting for my companion to ask me some questions as to the pressing engagement which had called me away the day before. But Harding had either forgotten, or else purposely avoided any mention of the subject; so at last, tired of waiting, I resolved to lead carefully up to the topic by putting the above query. When

I did put it, my friend slowly raised his eyes from the book before him, and allowed them, instead, to rest for a moment upon my face.

"What do you mean?" he inquired in his usual listless manner. "Pray explain yourself."

"You know what I mean," I said. "How do you think I look? Do you see any change in my appearance?"

"Change in your appearance!" repeated Harding. "No, I don't perceive anything special. Ah! yes," suddenly, "now that I examine your face attentively, I can see that your nose is slightly redder than usual. I hope you have not been drinking, Clason; it is a very distressing thing to see a man under the influence of liquor."

"Pshaw!" I exclaimed impatiently. "Can't you understand, Harding? What I want you to tell me is, do you remark any alteration in the *expression* of my features? Do I look any happier than I did yesterday, for instance?"

"Clason," said my friend solemnly, "you need not go any further. I know now what you mean; you have been to that dreadful place again. How could you do it? I gave you credit for more firmness of character—I did, indeed," and his eyes rested with a melancholy look upon the carpet. "After one visit," he continued, "after seeing that mother, how was it the vail did not fall from your eyes?"

"There is no vail about it," I said. "I admire Fräulein Altberg excessively, and I don't care a fig what kind of a mother she has. Am I not a lucky fellow, Harding? I had a little *tête-à-tête* with her yesterday all to myself, and perhaps, very soon, I may have another. The more I see of her, the better I like her"—and my face flushed at the mere recollection.

"Clason," said Harding, "what is it you intend to do? You may as well tell me the worst at once."

"Nothing very dreadful," I answered; "I am not going to eat her up, or run away with her.

I am simply going to marry her—that is to say, if she will have me."

"You cannot surely mean what you say, Clason," said Harding in a perfectly calm voice, and apparently quite unaffected by my unforeseen proclamation. "After years of daily intercourse with *me*, it is quite impossible that you should think of such a thing. Marriage is only excusable when it is brought about by the desire to gain either money or position; marriage for any other reason is pure folly. If you bind yourself to this—this person, instead of gaining either of the two things I have just mentioned, you will lose both. Besides that, why do you wish to marry at all? The idea that all men should marry, simply because it is one of Nature's laws, is quite a mistaken theory. You might as well say that all men should play the fiddle. Of course, I acknowledge there are some who can only find life bearable when they are tied forever to a woman—who think single-blessedness a thing to be abhorred—but I

should be more than sorry, Clason, to imagine you to be one of the number. A true philosopher does not want a wife—he wants convictions; and in this latter respect, my dear friend, I fear you are sadly deficient."

"Have you done?" I asked sarcastically, when finally Harding stopped speaking. "Have you anything more to say? for if you have, go on." Then, suddenly changing my tone to one of extreme irritability: "I might have known just what to expect from you. Instead of wishing a fellow joy, as any other friend might do under the circumstances, you sit there and preach your infernal philosophy, if it is philosophy—for, hang me! I sometimes think you are a greater ignoramus than any of us."

"Clason," said Harding, evidently much shocked, "you forget yourself! I always imagined that when a person asked another person's opinion, he expected to receive a truthful reply. Why should I wish you joy when I see you are about to make a fool of yourself over

Fräulein nobody-knows-who? I admit she has some attractions," he added half apologetically, seeing my rage gradually increasing; "the first night I saw her, I thought her quite presentable, in fact; but when it came to the mother, Clason, it was really too much. We must draw the line somewhere, you know, and I felt that no gentleman who properly respects himself could ever associate himself with a person who had such a very unprepossessing relative. The recollection of that visit will remain deeply rooted in my mind for years to come."

"Very well," I said in a hoarse voice, "we will drop the subject, if you please; but remember, Harding, nothing you can say will ever make me alter my determination. If Fräulein Altberg will accept me, I shall certainly marry her."

"Let us hope, then," said Harding, "that she will not accept you"—and, for the time being, the subject was dropped.

The next afternoon found me sitting in

Fräulein Altberg's parlor, anxiously waiting for her to make her appearance. I had not long to wait, however, on this occasion, for in a very few moments the door opened, and she came in smiling, holding both hands outstretched toward me. I rose quickly and, advancing to meet her, stood for a moment before her, gazing silently into her blushing face. She was in a different mood to-day, a laughing, coquettish mood, which caused my heart to leap wildly for an instant as I held her hands clasped tightly in mine, and then, as she suddenly withdrew them and threw herself down upon the *causeuse* with a *nonchalant*, pettish gesture, my spirits sank almost to despondency.

"Tell me," I said hurriedly, "tell me whether you have thought over what I said to you, and whether you will give me the answer I am waiting to hear? I cannot talk of common place things; I cannot even say 'How do you do,' until you answer me this first. Do not keep me in suspense—tell me quickly."

Fräulein Altberg tossed back her shapely head and laughed. Then she stopped short and cast down her eyes.

"You want me to marry you, do you not?" she asked. "Very well, I will marry you. Does that satisfy you?" and she laughed again.

"Satisfy me!" I cried, a great weight seeming to lift itself from my entire being. "Marie—I may call you Marie now, may I not?—you have made me more than satisfied, and I trust you may never have cause to regret the words you have just spoken to me. I will do everything in my power to make you happy; I love you so much, dear"—and once more I caught her hands in mine and covered them with kisses.

She smiled a little at my impetuosity, and then shook her head.

"Are you quite sure you will not repent having asked an actress to be your wife?" she said. "What will your family say?"

"I have no family," I said. "I occupy the enviable position of being totally minus relations

of any kind—neither father, mother, sister, nor brother. But you"—I continued, remembering suddenly that my fair *fiancée* was not similarly afflicted, "I shall have to speak to your mother, I suppose, shall I not?"

"Not at present, at all events. Let us keep our secret to ourselves for a little while—for a few days. It is all so strange and new to me, Mr. Clason."

"Why do you call me Mr. Clason?"

"What else should I call you? I do not even know your first name. Let me see if I can guess it," leaning toward me, and laying her hand caressingly on my arm. "Is it George?"

"Nothing one-quarter as beautiful as George," I said, laughing. "I am simply Thomas Clason."

"Well, then, simply Thomas Clason, I like you very much, and I will do anything you ask me to—but I think it is not necessary to speak to my mother just now about our engagement. By the way, what will you give me as a pledge of our engagement—a ring? No, I do not care for

rings. Give me the little medallion you have hanging from your watch-chain," and she leaned over and touched it with the tips of her fingers.

I unclasped it instantly. It was a tiny gold medallion set with pearls, and contained a lock of hair—my mother's. I removed the hair, placed it in my pocket, and handed the medallion to Fräulein Altberg.

"I wish I had something ten times as valuable to offer you," I whispered. "But if you care for such things I will get you another, much prettier than this."

"How kind you are!" she said. "This one is very pretty. I shall wear it to-morrow evening in the new play, *Der Veilchenfresser*. You will come, of course, will you not?"

"Do you think I could miss an opportunity of seeing you?" I cried, "even though you cannot see *me*, and are thinking only of the lines you have to speak. I cannot bear you out of my sight. It is happiness to me even to be near you."

She did not answer for a moment; then she looked up with a soft light in her eyes, and a smile dimpling the corners of her perfect mouth.

"To-morrow night," she said, "I shall play only to you; no matter whether I can find you in the crowd or not, I shall feel that you are there; and when the play is over, you will come here to me—will you not?—and we can talk it over; only do not bring Mr. Wright with you, nor your friend, Mr. Harding. I want you quite to myself—just as I have you now."

"Thank you for asking me," I said. "You know how glad I shall be to come. And why should you think of my bringing Wright or Harding with me? I cannot spare even a little bit of you to any one, and I am quite sure I shall make the most disagreeable lover that ever was born, for I am so jealous, that to see you smiling upon any other man would make me almost feel like killing you. So beware!" and as I stopped speaking, and looked down smiling into her face, I saw, to my surprise, that a far

off, dreamy expression had come suddenly into her shadowy eyes, and that she appeared to be thinking of something else.

VI.

"DEAR TOM:—At last I am done with my disagreeable business matters, and can contemplate returning to New York. I shall probably leave here in the morning train day after to-morrow, which will bring me to Gotham somewhere about dinner-time; so, if you have nothing special to do, drop in at the club toward six o'clock, and we will dine together. Afterward, if you like, we can stroll round to the Germania."

So wrote Philip; the letter reaching me the evening of the day I had seen Fräulein Altberg. I looked at the date—Wednesday. This was Thursday, so to-morrow he would arrive, and we could go together to see the *Veilchenfresser*. It was with a feeling of intense satisfaction that

I contemplated this expedition; for Philip was not like Harding, nor yet like Mr. Wright, and I was confident that although he might laugh at me, and try to dissuade me from marrying Fräulein Altberg, he was really too good a friend of mine to say anything that would seriously hurt my feelings, and in time might possibly be brought to consider my choice a good one. He was more a man of the world than the others—had traveled more, and was not at all inclined to settle down into a groove, and pursue a regular routine of living and thinking, as was Harding. He was a society man, of course, and as such not exempt from a certain amount of bigotry; but deep-rooted, immovable prejudices there were none in Philip's nature, and narrow-mindedness in any shape was as odious to him as it was to me. He was rather inclined to skepticism, it is true, in regard to love; but then, how could he put any faith in women after being so basely deceived in Dresden by one in whom he had trusted and given a helping-hand? And—well, was

I not disposed myself to think slightingly of the God of Love until my own heart had been pierced by one of his shafts?

The next evening at six o'clock, therefore, I presented myself at the club, my heart beating high with pleasurable excitement. Philip was there before me, and shook my hand heartily as I advanced toward him.

"Well Tom, old boy," he said, "how wags the world with you? I suppose you were beginning to fear I had left New York forever, and intended taking up my residence in the northern wilds. I really thought I should never get away."

"Now that you are here," I said cordially, "I'm awfully glad to see you, Philip. It *was* rather mean of you to desert us in that unceremonious manner, but it probably could not have been avoided. Why is it, I wonder, that business matters of importance always make themselves known and thrust themselves forward at the most inopportune times?"

"Was the time particularly inopportune?" asked Philip. "It was a devilish *long* time to be away; but I imagine, as it had to be done, that one week was as good as another."

"Of course it was inopportune," I said in some surprise. "Have you forgotten, Philip, that I have been waiting for you to see Fräulein Altberg?"

We were seated at dinner by this time in a tiny room all to ourselves, and the waiter had just carried away our oyster plates and disappeared in search of the soup.

"Ah! yes," said Philip carelessly. "We are to see her this evening, are we not, Tom? I take it for granted, you observe, that you are as much infatuated as ever."

"Philip," I said abruptly, and with a certain nervousness that I could not overcome when speaking of her, "would you think it very strange if I were to tell you I was more than infatuated with Fräulein Altberg, and that I really thought seriously of marrying her?"

"*What!*" cried Philip, in such a loud tone that the glasses fairly rattled. "What did you say, Tom?"

"You see," I went on, becoming more and more uncomfortable under his gaze, and trying to turn it off with a laugh, in which attempt, however, I failed ignominiously. "You see that I have been improving my opportunities during your absence. Wright knows her, and he introduced us—Harding and me—and I can't tell you precisely how it all came about, Philip, but the fact remains the same, that I am going to marry her, unless, indeed, she runs off with somebody else in the meanwhile."

"Well, Thomas," said Philip decidedly, "I must say that you certainly *have not* neglected your opportunities; but I shall reserve my opinion in regard to your conduct until I see the young lady. Of course, if you think your happiness depends upon this marriage taking place, I would be the last man in the world to dissuade you from the idea." And he

stretched his hand across the table and clasped mine.

"Thank you, old fellow," I said, more touched than I cared to show, by this involuntary act of kindness and good-will; "I knew you would understand, and not bore me with long dissertations and arguments, as Harding does; and, O Philip, when you see her, you will tell me that I am indeed a lucky fellow."

We finished dinner rather hurriedly, so as to arrive at the beginning of the performance, and when we reached the theater we had some difficulty in obtaining seats, so great was the crowd assembled to witness the new play; but we finally succeeded in procuring two places in a sufficiently good part of the house to enable us to have a fine view of the stage. The curtain was just rising, and Philip glanced round at the audience with something like a smile on his face.

"How this reminds me of the old days!" he said. "I should never imagine myself to be in America—this is Germany personified. Where

do they all come from, I wonder—one never sees these people anywhere else. Look at that woman in front of us, Tom. What do you think she is? She is not a poor person, evidently, for she is literally a walking jeweler's shop, and she is certainly not a lady nor— *Oh! by Jove!*"

Fräulein Altberg had just come upon the stage, and was bowing right and left in acknowledgment of the applause which greeted her. I heard Philip's sudden exclamation, and attributed it to his surprise at seeing such a beautiful face. I was staring straight in front of me, devouring her with my eyes, waiting until the noise should subside before I said anything to my companion.

"Oh! I say," said Philip's voice again, speaking in a strange sort of whisper, "is *that* Fräulein Altberg, Tom?"

"It is," I replied joyfully. "I thought you would admire her, Philip. Did you ever see such a face before? Is she not superb?"

But Philip did not answer; he had seized my

opera-glass, and was scanning Fräulein Altberg's features intently. Presently he laid the glass down again, and for the first time I noticed that his countenance had altered, and his usual *debonair* expression given way to one of mingled pain and astonishment.

"Why, Philip," I said, "what *is* the matter with you?"

"Come out," he replied in an excited *sotto voce*. "Come out, Tom; I have something to tell you, but I cannot tell it here. Come out for a few moments."

"And miss the best part of the play?" I asked in amazement. "Cannot your information keep awhile? It cannot be anything of vital importance."

"It *is*," said Philip in a determined tone. "It will *not* keep, and you must come outside with me for a moment."

I rose somewhat reluctantly, and proceeded to follow him out, wondering what had suddenly come over him.

"Tom," he said hurriedly, when we were quite out of the theater, and were standing alone on the deserted sidewalk, "I have a very unpleasant piece of news for you, my dear fellow: that woman whom you call Fräulein Altberg is not Fräulein Altberg at all. You remember the story I told you about that vile girl in Dresden—Lottchen? Well, *that* is Lottchen—don't you understand, Tom? Fräulein Altberg and Lottchen are the same person. Now, swear at me or knock me down if you choose, but, hang me, it's the truth."

I did not reply; I only stood stock-still, staring at my friend as though I thought he had suddenly taken leave of his senses, as indeed I did.

"What do you mean?" I gasped at last. "Are you drunk, Philip, or crazy? How can Fräulein Altberg and Lottchen possibly be the same person? You *must* be mistaken."

"I am not mistaken, Tom," replied Philip decidedly. "Do you think I could by any chance

be in error as to her identity? Come," and he drew my arm within his, "let us find the manager of this atrocious place—perhaps *he* will be able to convince you."

Once more we entered the theater, and advancing toward the box-office, Philip asked permission to see the manager for a few minutes.

"Herr Schmidt," said the man, "was up-stairs in his private office. He did not know whether Herr Schmidt could be disturbed, but he would send up to see"—and an official whom he called Hans was accordingly dispatched to inquire. Hans returned in a few moments and desired the gentleman to walk up-stairs, and Philip and I followed him to the second story, where we were shown into Herr Schmidt's presence. It was a small room almost entirely filled by a large table covered with ledgers, papers, and pamphlets of every description, and before it sat the manager himself, busily engaged in writing. He put down his pen as we entered, and asked

in bland tones what he could do to serve us—although he could not conceal a certain amount of astonishment, which our unexpected visit had evidently occasioned.

"Herr Schmidt," I said, trying to speak in as unconcerned a voice as possible, "my friend Mr. Randolph and myself would like to ask you a few questions in regard to one of your actresses—Fräulein Altberg—if you have no objection."

Herr Schmidt started slightly, and invited us to be seated. Then he rubbed his hands through his hair, and glanced from me to Philip in perplexity.

"Vat do you vish to know?" he asked presently.

"Will you be kind enough to tell us, Herr Schmidt," asked Philip, "exactly where and how you happened to meet with Fräulein Altberg, and whether you know anything concerning her previous history? It is not idle curiosity, believe me, which leads me to make these inquiries—it

is necessity—otherwise, I should not think of troubling you."

"It ish no troubles," said Herr Schmidt, waving his hand amicably. "She haf been mit me for von year now. I find her in England, vere she lived mit an old gentleman she call 'papa.' Der old gentleman he say he find her in Dresden, selling flowers. Dat ish all vot I knows"—and he settled himself back in his chair with a satisfied air.

"And her name?" I interrupted. "Is not her name Marie Altberg?"

"*Ach was!*" cried Herr Schmidt in a most disparaging tone of voice. "She take dat name ven she come mit me—you understan'? Ven I first see her she called herself Lottchen Dumpelberg—but I told her dat vould never do. Who would come and see an actress dat call herself Lottchen Dumpelberg? No, no! I make her change it." And Herr Schmidt chuckled in evident delight at the recollection of his former wit.

"Then, I suppose, that person she lives with at present is not her mother either?" I asked in such a queer voice that I hardly recognized it.

"Bah!" said Herr Schmidt, "she haf no mudder; she never haf mudder dat I know. *Ach nein!* Dat ish only vat here you calls, *mein Gott!* a put-up job. Now, vat more you vants to know?"

"Nothing more, thanks," I answered in a choked voice. "We are very much obliged to you, Herr Schmidt, and must apologize for our intrusion at such an untimely hour, but it was absolutely necessary that we should know positively these details. Good-evening. Come, Philip."

We bowed and left the office. On our way down-stairs Philip turned toward me and laid his hand on my arm.

"Don't take it to heart, Tom," he said kindly. "That woman isn't worth regretting; she's the veriest fiend on the face of the earth, I believe. She saw you were desperately in love with her,

and she made up her mind to catch you, and, of course, she succeeded—for with that face she could do almost anything. I don't really suppose that in her heart she cares a fig for you. A woman like that is not capable of caring for anything beyond gratifying her insatiable vanity. She probably thought you were rich, and able to give her a position in society. O Tom! I would never have believed it of you! To think that *you*, who thought yourself so securely armed against feminine wiles, should at last have fallen a victim to the very woman I took such pains to warn you against. Was not my experience sufficient? But never mind; I won't tease you at present, at all events. Where are you going?"

"To *her* house," I answered sternly. "I shall hear the truth from her own lips. You shall go with me, Philip."

"But the theater is not out yet; she will not be at home."

"Never mind, we can wait."

"Just as you please, my dear fellow; but you cannot imagine how strange the idea of meeting Lottchen face to face again makes me feel. By Jove! I wonder what she did with my scarf-pin and ring! Has she got anything of yours, Tom?"

"She asked me for the medallion I wore on my watch-chain the other day, and I gave it to her. It was the day she promised to marry me."

"That is quite in keeping with Lottchen's character," said Philip. "Such an opportunity as that was not to be thrown away."

We had reached the hotel by this time, and proceeded to make our way to the deserted parlor. Madame Altberg always accompanied her "daughter" to the theater, so there was no one to disturb us. Philip picked up one of the albums from the table, and began to examine the photographs, while I sat by in moody silence.

"Hang me!" said Philip suddenly, "if this

isn't the portrait of the *soi-disant* brother—the accomplice, you know! Come here and look, Tom."

"Don't bother me about portraits," I answered ungraciously. "I don't care whose portrait is there, and I don't want to hear her name mentioned again—do you understand me, Philip? This is not a time for jokes."

"I did not make any joke that I am aware of," said Philip. "This *dénouement* seems to have turned your head, Tom."

I looked at the clock—half-past nine. In another hour she ought to be home. During that hour I would prepare a speech of withering scorn and sarcasm combined, with which to assail her, and I smiled grimly to myself as I contemplated her expression in hearing it.

"I say," said Philip, "she will be astonished enough to see *me* here, will she not? Lottchen is a clever woman, a very clever woman, but we have got the better of her this time. What kind of a person is the mother, Tom?"

"Disgustingly vulgar," I replied in a dreary monotone. "Harding nearly fainted when he saw her."

"Really," said Philip, "I begin to think this an extremely interesting adventure. It will be quite enjoyable by and by."

"Very enjoyable, no doubt, for you," I said. "It will not be quite so pleasant for me, however."

A long silence. Philip continued to examine the photographs, and when he had finished the last volume he walked over to the piano and, turning over the music, began to hum softly to himself. The hands of the clock went round to ten o'clock; only one more half-hour and then it would be over—at least, I hoped so. What a fool I had been!—what a fool, what a fool!—I kept repeating to myself until the words lost all significance, and became utterly devoid of meaning. After all, though, I was no worse than Philip. He had been deceived by her, so why not others as well? All this time,

where was my great love for her? Gone! vanished like a dream, leaving me face to face with stern, grim-visaged reality. It had been nothing but an illusion, then—a mad infatuation of the moment? Who knows? Who can explain the sudden turning of adoration into disgust and loathing? At that moment, I think, I positively loathed Fräulein Altberg. While I was thus meditating, and wondering what would be the most fitting terms to use in order to express the true state of my feelings toward her, the door opened quickly, and the subject of my meditation entered.

She had come straight from the theater in her stage costume, and round her neck I could see gleaming the gold and pearls of my little medallion. I rose as she came in, accompanied by her mother, and she advanced toward me. Philip was by the piano at the far end of the room, with his back toward us, and Fräulein Altberg evidently was not aware of his presence, for she looked neither to the right nor the left, only

straight before her at my upright figure, into which I endeavored to instill an extra amount of dignity.

"Why, Mr. Clason," she said, "I did not expect you so early. Have you just come from the theater? Have you been waiting long?"

Where was the scornful speech I had prepared to answer her with? I could not remember one word of it, but I felt that no time must be lost in asserting myself, and letting her know the actual purport of my visit. I therefore drew myself up stiffly, and sought to speak in a perfectly calm and majestic tone.

"Fräulein Altberg," I said, "you invited me to come here this evening without either Mr. Harding or Mr. Wright, and I have obeyed your wishes. You said nothing, however, in reference to any one else, so I have taken the liberty of bringing another friend of mine — one who also claims old acquaintanceship with you. Philip," raising my voice slightly, "let me present you to Fräulein Altberg."

Philip turned as I mentioned his name, and now came forward with a graceful bow. As the full glare of the gas-light fell upon his face, I saw Fräulein Altberg give a sudden start, and then turn deathly pale.

"Yes," said Philip, "I remember Fräulein Altberg perfectly well; only she used to be called by another name, when we were such friends in Dresden."

"There is some mistake," she said finally, speaking in a hard, unnatural voice. "I do not remember this gentleman. Why do you bring him here, Mr. Clason?"

"You may not remember me," said Philip, "but I doubt if you have ever forgotten my pearl pin and my watch, for they must have brought you a good round sum. I see, too, Lottchen, that you have gained a relative since I knew you, in the shape of a very excellent and substantial mother; surely, she should take the place of both mother and husband, and that being the case, you do not want my friend

Clason. Come, Tom, there is no need of our staying here any longer, is there?"

"Certainly not," I replied with dignity. "I must wish you good-evening, Fräulein Altberg. You are a very clever actress, but the best of actresses are liable to fail sometimes; and, pardon me for saying so, you have certainly failed on this occasion."

"What is the matter?" suddenly exclaimed Madame Altberg. "What are these gentlemen talking about, Marie, my dear? I can't understand a word they say."

"Oh! nothing worth mentioning," said her daughter with admirable coolness, having completely recovered herself. "Mr. Clason, mamma, asked me to marry him the other day, and now he has come to tell me that he repents of his offer. *Gentlemen* do not generally do such things, but I dare say it is an American custom."

"It is not the custom, at all events," I said, "for gentlemen in America to marry thieves.

Good-evening, Fräulein Altberg. Come, Philip, I am quite ready"—and, bowing gravely, we both took our departure.

"That *was* magnificent!" said Philip, drawing a long breath, as we walked away. "You don't think we overdid it, Tom, do you? You don't consider our expressions a little too strong?"

"Not a bit of it," I replied; "served her right. But, Philip, I have a favor to ask of you. Don't say anything to Harding about this unexpected *dénouement*, will you? I do not care to hear his theories on the subject; I can fix it all right with him myself."

"Very well," said Philip, "I shall be as silent as the grave. There is a proverb, Tom, which says, 'He who laughs last, laughs best'—but, perhaps, we had better not speak of that until you are in a more composed frame of mind. And now, as long as it is not late, suppose you come over to my rooms, and we'll have a smoke."

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